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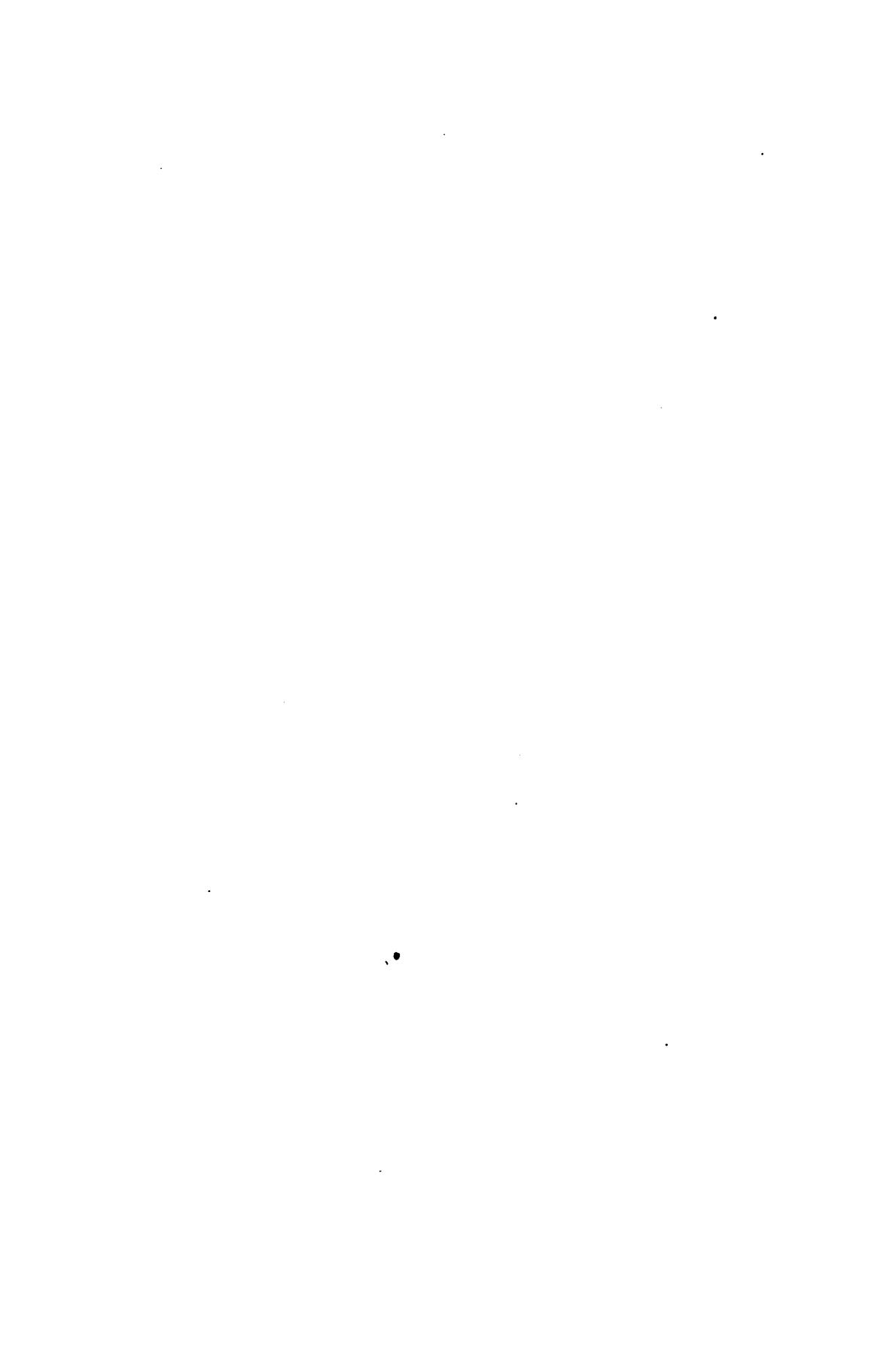


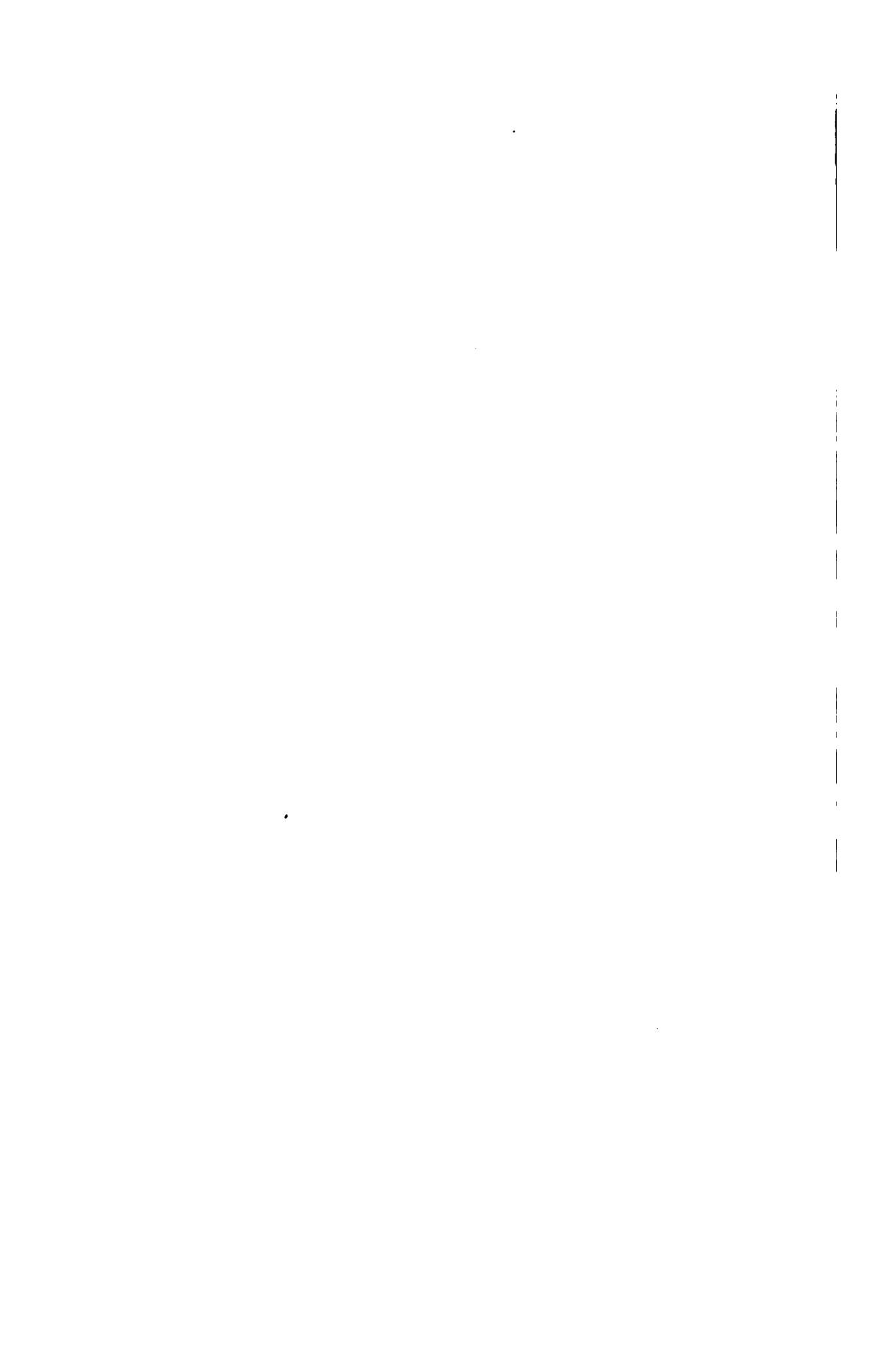


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**HOMER AND THE ILIAD**

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# HOMER AND THE ILIAD

BY

JOHN STUART BLACKIE, F.R.S.E.

PROFESSOR OF GREEK IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

VOL I

HOMERIC DISSERTATIONS



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TO

**FREDERICK GOTTLIEB WELCKER,**

**PROFESSOR OF GREEK LITERATURE, BONN;**

**GEORGE FINLAY, LL.D.**

**HISTORIAN AND ARCHAEOLOGIST, ATHENS;**

AND

**WILLIAM GEORGE CLARK, M.A.**

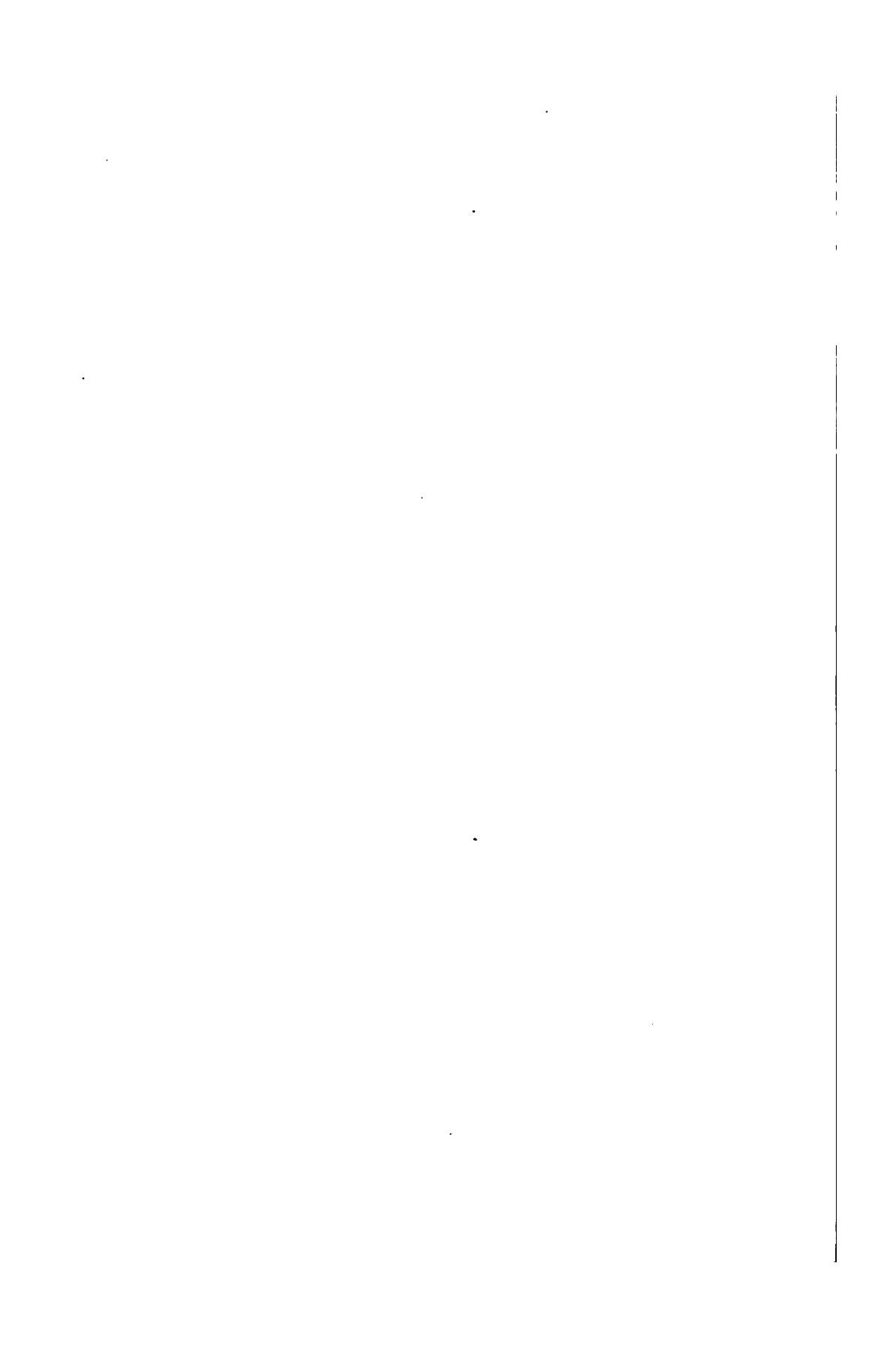
**FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, AND PUBLIC ORATOR, CAMBRIDGE,**

**THESE VOLUMES OF HOMERIC STUDY**

**ARE DEDICATED**

**BY**

**THE AUTHOR.**



## P R E F A C E.

THE present work endeavours to supply what has long appeared to me a want in the literature of this country, viz., such an exhibition of the great national poem of the Greeks, and of the spirit of Greek life contained in it, as might place the English gentleman of culture and intelligence—in regard at least to the great distinctive points of Homeric poetry—on an equal platform with the professional scholar. That this platform is possible even for those who do not read Greek, the analogy of our Christian religion and of the English Scriptures shows clearly enough. What is wanted is a translation executed with the special purpose of bringing out what is characteristic in the original, accompanied by such aids from general discussion and special comment, as the lapse of time and the distance between old Hellenic and modern English points of view may render necessary. The work, accordingly, consists of three parts—*first*, as the centre-piece, a translation of the Iliad, which, whatever may be its faults, shall be found to represent the special character of Homer as an *ἀοιδός*, or old Ionian minstrel, faithfully, and to bring out every trait and touch of old Hellenic life and feeling with a discriminating preference; *second*, a series of discussions or dissertations, in which the many interesting

and important questions that belong to the origin, growth, and conservation of early, and specially Hellenic popular poetry, are systematically treated ; and, *third*, a regular and continuous commentary, which shall direct the attention of the modern reader to the peculiarities of old Hellenic faith and life, successively as they occur in the poem. The dissertations may be compared to a vehicle in which I transport my reader into a foreign country ; the notes to the local guide or cicerone, who directs his eye to the curiosities as they emerge, and gives such information as an intelligent traveller may naturally demand.

I appeal, therefore, directly to a popular, not to an academical audience ; but the matter which I handle is, in its roots and foundations, so essentially entwined with the learned thought of Europe since the revival of letters, that in striving to instruct the general public, I felt myself obliged at every step to satisfy the scholar. Besides, it was plain to me, on the surface of our most approved translations of Homer, that they were constantly committing offences against the spirit of Homer's poetry, because they had never grappled seriously with any question of Greek language and Greek thought ; because, though they were good poets, they did not profess to be philologists. I have endeavoured, therefore, in my notes, to assign such solid reasons for the peculiar versions which I give of disputed words, as shall either satisfy the demands of the scientific philology of the present day, or present a distinct issue on which some more intelligent judge may decide.

One object kept constantly in view in the Notes was to

trace the growth of sacred myths in Greece, by contrasting their simple germ in Homer with the florid expansion of their latest form. As a contribution to the history of what has been called development in other creeds, this may not be without its uses. I have also paid particular attention to the illustration of Greek religion and practical piety as they present themselves in my author; hoping that my stray observations on this interesting subject may act as a spur to some future scholar, who shall supply what appears to me a great want in our British scholarship—a history of religious life and opinion among the Greek people, from its pre-Homeric infancy (of which we have so many curious glimpses in Pausanias), to its decadence and decay under the Roman Emperors.

The materials of these Notes are the result of my own reading carried through a series of years, combined with what I could gather from the rich stores of classical excavation piled up in many systematic works by the thoughtful and indefatigable Germans, and by those English scholars who, under the effective generalship of Dr. William Smith, have of late years followed their example. From these I have borrowed freely wheresoever my own observations did not supply a sufficiently large field of induction; but I have taken nothing lightly on any man's authority, and on every occasion sifted the materials carefully, cross-questioned the witnesses, and given a cautious and well-weighed verdict on the evidence before me. The general works to which I have been principally indebted are named in a separate list at the end of the fourth volume. Special refer-

ences are given, besides, both in the Dissertations and the Notes, to the best works on the several subjects discussed ; so that the reader, if he is not content with what I give him, may know where to go for something better. But I imagine he will rather, in most cases, be inclined to thank me for having given him in brief abstract the main scope and gist of many erudite volumes whose pleasantness is not always in the direct ratio of their profundity.

The principles on which I have handled the text will be pretty evident from Dissertation IX. I have only to say further, that though I made careful notes of the objections made to all the bracketed passages by the principal critics, both ancient and modern, in the commentary I have generally confined myself to those cases in which I have myself performed the process of excision. The function of a translator did not seem to require that I should go further. Besides, to tell the truth, the objections advanced are in the majority of cases so arbitrary and hypercritical, that to spend words in refuting them were to attach an importance to erudite trifling which it is on many grounds not desirable that it should possess.

With regard to the principles on which the translation is executed, having devoted a special Dissertation to this subject, I have little to add here. One or two points only may claim a remark. One of the gentlemen to whom I submitted my proofs seemed to think that I had taken certain liberties with the pauses of my verse, which are contrary to its recognised laws. This may be so ; but I did so purposely, as Byron purposely transgressed some of the established

rhythrical canons of the Spenserian stanza ; and if there is anything wrong in the pauses which I use, I still think that the fault must lie, not in the principle on which I composed, but in the unskilful manner in which I have applied it. I knew well, and indeed was somewhat oppressed by the feeling, that the great danger which lies close to the fourteen-syllabled verse is the same as that which besets the decasyllabic couplet of Pope, viz., monotony and sing-song. This I endeavoured to prevent by the free use of triplets, and also by occasionally overriding the octosyllabic cæsura in which this measure delights ; as in the line IV.

358--

"Jove-born Laertes, subtle-thoughted, many-scheming chief,"

which, of course, I could as easily have rendered,

"Jove-born Laertes, subtle chief, thou many-scheming wight."

But I did not see why I was not as much entitled, or rather, for the sake of variety, bound, to divide my line occasionally by nine and five, as Spenser was to divide his Alexandrian, as he occasionally does, by seven and five. Another point touching the translation is the occasional use of archaic words. This is a matter which, I am well aware, requires the most delicate handling ; but I did it sparingly, and with deliberation ; and those who have any experience of the difficulties that beset a metrical version of Homer will be the first to pardon, or perhaps to approve, the offence. The few Scotch words which I have used have either been already sanctioned by Tennyson, Dobell, Browning, and other modern masters of the English lyre, or will at once recommend themselves to

every reader of catholic taste by their expressiveness and beauty.<sup>1</sup> A third point at which the scholarly reader of my version may be apt to stumble is the freedom with which I use epithets. This arises from the principle laid down in the *Dissertations* (p. 144), and exemplified in the Notes, that in Homer, and in popular poetry generally, the epithet does not belong to the passage, but to the person or to the thing. I therefore give the person or the thing always the proper Homeric epithet belonging to it, but not always the epithet which is found in the particular passage. The harmony of each verse was to me properly a matter of more imperative consideration than the mere literal photograph of an expression which, according to the laws of Homeric poetry, had in that particular verse no significance.

One other explanation only with regard to the translation requires to be made. A fashion has lately crept in among our academically-trained men—borrowed, I suspect, like many good, and some bad, things from Germany,—according to which it is esteemed a grave offence to call Jupiter Jupiter, or even Jove, but we must transfer the Greek *Ζεύς* literally into our language, and say *ZEUS*. Now, I must confess that I never could see any advantage in this fashion, except, perhaps, in humorous poetry, to afford a convenient rhyme for *deuce*. In a technical work on Greek mythology it may no doubt be proper to designate Greek gods curiously by their Greek names; but in the classical and idiomatic use of the English language, cultivated as it has been by so

<sup>1</sup> The word *glamour* for *Σλύω*, and *swirling* for *διρήσις*, which I frequently use, are Scotch words, to my feeling decidedly superior to any of their English equivalents.

many mighty masters, it will go hard to prove that there is any impropriety in saying Mercury for Hermes, Jove for Zeus, or Vulcan for Hephaestus. I do not object, of course, to any translator or writer using the Greek word if he pleases. I have, in fact, generally done so myself. It has, at all events, the advantage of novelty, and that is always a main point for superficial effect; but I insist upon the right to say Jove for Zeus, if I please, and, in fact, prefer the English word much to the Greek one; for it means the same thing, and is much more musical. And if any one says that the name "Neptune," for instance, for the sea-god, brings with it Roman associations, while the designation Poseidon has a thoroughly Greek character, I answer this is not the case; for the Roman poets, from whom we borrowed our designations of the persons of the classic Olympus, though they used the Italian word *Neptunus*, adopted the Greek ideas connected with the Greek *Ποσειδῶν* wholesale, and there is not a tinge of Rome about it, any more than there is of English theology in the Anglicized word Mercury. This is not the case indeed with all the Greek gods; and wherever, as in the case of Saturn, the transference of the Italian name to the Greek god confounds separate personalities, and transfers incongruous ideas, the usage of the Romans and of our great English classics must be given up. For this reason I have never called Kronos Saturn. There is another case also in which the use of the Anglo-Roman name of a Greek god should be disallowed, viz., the case in which time has attached to the appellation a narrow significance or a vulgar association which did not belong to it originally. Such a case we

have in Bacchus, who is fit to appear nowhere save with a red face and a big paunch astride on a round cask, as the appropriate blazonry of a tavern. But in Greek poetry and in classical company he must always be termed Dionysus.

In the orthography of classical proper names I am afraid I shall be considered by curious observers deficient in systematic consistency. If this be a fault, I hope it may be considered a counterbalancing merit that I have abstained from all unnecessary innovations, remembering that we are not now using the names of famous Greeks and Romans for the first time, and that the usage of centuries in such matters has an authority and a convenience which no accuracy of minute syllabic proprieties can counterweigh.

It were ungrateful in me to send forth these volumes to the world without returning thanks to the gentlemen who took the trouble of looking carefully over the proof-sheets as they went through the press. These were, in the rhythmical part of the work, Sheriff Trotter, Dumfries, and Theodore Martin, Esq., London. To both these gentlemen, whose judgment in points of poetical translation no man will dispute, I am indebted not only for putting their finger on flaws which had escaped my own notice, but also for making suggestions which I could without scruple adopt into my text. To Dr. Donaldson, Rector of the High School in this city, whose exact and comprehensive scholarship is well known, I owe a debt of thanks for the careful manner in which he revised the Notes. Mr. Charles Maclaren also assisted me materially in some of my topographical investigations. To his kindness I owe the excellent map at the

end of the fourth volume of this work, which is an impression from the same plate that was used for the illustration of his masterly work on the Plain of Troy.

The Index was prepared by myself with great care, and will, I hope, be found of general utility. In the commentary, for the sake of condensation and completeness of view, I adopted the plan of massing all that belonged to the same head into one note. A note was generally made at that part of the poem where any person or subject receives peculiar prominence. Thus the character and functions of Neptune are discussed under Book XIII.; the Scamander, the Simois, and the topography of the plain of Troy generally, under Book XXI. If, therefore, on any verse which seems to invite comment, the reader finds a blank in the Notes, he has only to consult the index under the fitting head, and he will in all likelihood be directed to the information which he requires. If he should find in a few instances a simple reference to a verse in the Iliad, it will be a sign that nothing worthy of notice is to be said of the person or thing beyond what is mentioned in the Homeric text.

EDINBURGH, 1st October 1866.



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HOMERIC DISSERTATIONS.



## HOMERIC DISSERTATIONS.

THE intelligent contemplation of any great work of poetic art implies a knowledge of two things : the materials from which the work was composed, and the form into which these were moulded by the shaping genius of the poet. What the student of Homer, therefore, has to expect from a series of preliminary discourses on his great poem, the *Iliad*, consists mainly in an answer to these two questions, —From what sort of materials was that poem put together ? and, What was the distinctive character of the presiding genius under the action of which these materials took shape ? What was the war of Troy ?—a plain affair of blood and battery like the siege of Sebastopol, or a brilliant figment of the imagination, like so many terrible encounters of slashing swordsmen and dashing cavaliers in Ariosto and the *Mort d'Arthur* ? What was Spartan Helen ?—a beautiful woman, like other women not a few, whose fair features have been the innocent cause of the shedding of much human tears, and gall, and blood ; or only the artistic embodiment of a beautiful star, the Hellenic transmutation of a Sanscrit Aurora, the shining shepherdess of celestial kine in the pastures of the Vedic Olympus ?<sup>1</sup> What was Homer ?—a man, or many men—a person or a symbol—the symbol of a minstrel brotherhood and the type of a national tendency ?

<sup>1</sup> Max Muller, *Science of Language*, vol. ii. p. 471.

But besides the discussion of these questions, the reflective reader of such a poem as the Iliad—a work now nearly three thousand years old—will desire to know under what guarantee of authenticity he possesses the text as he now uses it; how far it may, in the course of time, have been exposed to accidental or intentional interpolations; and whether there are any tests of a really scientific character by which what is late and adventitious in our present manuscripts may be separated from what is ancient and original. An important question also will arise to the student of the Iliad, who, from ignorance of the Greek language, is forced to receive his impression of that time-hallowed work through the medium of a translation: What are the principles on which the translation of a poem should be made, so as to convey to the mind of a modern reader, as far as may be, a true image, not only of the matter and the substance—a comparatively easy task,—but of the living movement, character, colour, and atmosphere of the ancient work? Such, stated in the most general way, are the questions which an expositor of Homer, at the present day, must expect to have proposed to him by those of his readers for whom he has the greatest respect; and I accordingly set myself to answer them in the best manner I can, after no light and trivial consideration, but with such seriousness as is due to a work of high art, which, next to the sacred Scriptures, has been, in the closest possible manner, compacted into the framework of literary tradition, and the most intimately interwoven with the whole texture of cultivated thought in modern Europe.

## DISSERTATION I.

### ON THE MATERIALS OF NATIONAL AND POPULAR POETRY— TRADITION : ITS CHARACTER AND CONTENTS.

OF Poetry, the most graceful at once, and the most truthful definition that I know, is that given by the late Leigh Hunt. "Poetry," said that ingenious and sunny-souled writer, "is the flower of any sort of experience rooted in truth and growing up into beauty." Here we have, in my opinion, a definition which at once enables us to distinguish between what is spurious in poetical composition, and what is genuine ; between what is showy, and what is substantial ; between what is ephemeral, and what is enduring. There are poems which may most fitly be compared to soap-bubbles —floating in the air for a short space with the most lovely forms and hues of landscape and architecture pictured in their light and lucid globes ; but they have no root, no permanency ; they are blown into existence ; they do not grow. A great poem, on the other hand, is a reality ; every true poem, indeed, that is an organic utterance of the whole man, and not a mere pretty play of fancy or cunning juggle of words, is a reality ; and it is in this reality that its power over real men in this real world consists. No form of literary composition in the present day calls into play so much of the most high and varied talent as novels and

other works of fiction ; but these works are read and enjoyed by the better class of readers, not so much from interest in the fiction, however skilfully contrived, as from the deeply felt reality of the life which they portray. A really good novel does, in fact, give the reader the very cream of present reality. The novel is the epic of common life, and as such has a right to claim somewhat of the more philosophical character which Aristotle assigns to all poetry, as distinguished from history.<sup>1</sup> It is with the permanent types of society that the novel has to do ; the greatest and most important reality of the life of man with man. It is with these types that all poetry has to do ; and herein precisely lies its common truth and universal validity. But more than this. Invented types of humanity, however truthful, will never have the same speaking power to the great mass of the people as actual, living, and breathing types. Every prominent man in any human society is a type or model of some grand human excellence ; and, when the original appears, he must be a poor pedant who shall still prefer gazing at a picture. Nelson and Wellington were two living types, the one of fervid, the other of cool, heroic energy ; and as such will always keep a firmer hold of the British imagination than any the most perfect soldier or sea-captain that the pencil of the most cunning writer of fiction could paint. What hero of romance ever exercised such a sway over the minds of men as Napoleon Buonaparte, when

<sup>1</sup> Aristot. *Plot.* 9.—Φανερὸν δὲ ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων καὶ οὐ τὸ τὰ γενόμενα λέγειν, τοῦτο ποιητοῦ ἔργον ἐστίν, ἀλλ' οὐταντά κατὰ τὸ εἰκός η τὸ ἀναγκαῖον. ὁ γάρ ιστορικὸς καὶ ὁ ποιητὴ οὐ τῷ. η ἔμμετρα λέγειν η ἀμετρα διαφέρουσιν εἴη γάρ ἀν τὰ Ἰροδότου εἰς μέτρα τεθῆναι, καὶ οὐδὲν ἥττον ἀν εἴη | ιστορία τις μετὰ μέτρου η ἀνεν μέτρων ἀλλὰ τοιτῷ διαφέρει, τῷ τὸν μὲν τὰ γενόμενα λέγειν, τὸν δὲ οὐταντά διό καὶ φιλοσοφώτερον καὶ σπουδαιώτερον ποίησις ιστορίας ἐστίν. η μὲν γάρ ποιησις μᾶλλον τὰ καθόλου, η δὲ ιστορία τα καθ' ἔκαστον λέγει.

he thundered and lightened over Europe, Africa, and Asia, and portioned out kingdoms like a god? And if such is the fascinating force of a powerful and vivid personality now, in the early ages of the world we may rest assured its efficacy was much greater. For we have in these days a literary class, and a class of persons with strong literary sympathies, for whom mere art, the rich play of fancy, the subtle inventiveness of imagination, and the cunningly carved phrase, have a peculiar interest, altogether apart from the actuality of the materials on which these plastic faculties are exercised. But in the early times it was otherwise. In the days when Homer sang and Moses wrote, men would not accept a purely fictitious narrative. There might be many fictions in what they believed, but these fictions were either the graceful festoons with which facts were decorated, or the beautiful flowers into which facts had blossomed. The craving for reality is too strong in the early stages of human society to tolerate an entertainment artificially tricked out from mere invention. Dr. Arnold, the great English teacher, remarked that boys before the age of puberty had no taste for poetry; and it is quite certain that vigorous nations in the first stages of intellectual culture will not be content to be fed on the spoon-meat of pretty fancies; nor happily do they require the unhealthy stimulant of strange attitudes and startling imaginations. All early popular literature grows out of the popular life, and that life has two great parts,—the life of inward passion and sentiment, which gives birth to war-songs, love-songs, and religious hymns; and the life of outward action and adventure, which gives birth to epic poetry. No poem, even in the later ages of cultivated literature, has ever made a great popular impression, unless when it contained what was true, or what was generally

believed to be true. The power of Tasso's great epic lay as much in the reality of the Crusades, and in the then dangerous prominence of the Turk, as in the graceful, pure, and lofty genius of its author. Milton stands on the book of Genesis, the faith of universal Christendom, and a type of theological thought far older than the Protestant Puritans with whom he was accidentally connected. The great poem of Virgil would have fallen as feeble as the Thebaid of Statius, or as futile as the Epigoniad of a modern Scotch poet, had not the Trojan colonization of Rome been a fact as firmly seated in the Roman consciousness, as the fact of the Crusades was in the memory of the Venetian boatmen who sang the sonorous stanzas of Tasso beneath the walls of those proud palaces which had so often sent out their merchant princes to curb the insolence of the Turk, and to keep the waters of the Mediterranean sacred to the banner of the Cross. In Shakspeare's grand series of historical dramas—the real Iliad of English literature—we see another striking instance of the power by which a healthy genius is drawn towards the realities of time and space by which he is environed. In Walter Scott the same tendency is dominant. Not only are his poems, for the most part, mere graceful adaptations and ingenious combinations of well-known historical facts, deeply rooted in the subsoil of the national memory, but the very form and features of the Scottish landscape, whether amid the mellow woods of Tweeddale, or the grim indented ridges of Skye, are rendered with a faithfulness to which no art of the photographer can approach. A similar truthfulness of topographic detail is found everywhere in Homer, and will find ample illustration in our commentary on "the Catalogue of the Ships." The singular charm of Goethe's 'Faust' will be found to

consist in the complete and thorough German reality of its hero, its sentiments, and its scenery. The Germans are a speculative people, and Faust is a speculative Don Juan. But mighty as Goethe was to create a story out of his own brain, he was too real a man to deviate in this way from the practical instinct which sways all great poets. He found Faust a real man in the tradition of the German people, and Mephistopheles a real devil; and he adopted both, and took whole scenes, with little alteration, from the vulgar chap-book, as Shakspeare did from Italian novels, Plutarch's Lives, and old chronicles of all sorts. Contrast the living fibre of popular reality characteristic of these great masters, with the floating filmy looseness of those who have appealed to the popular sympathies through the medium of pictures either altogether fictitious, or not felt as interesting realities by the people to whom they were presented. Lucretius wrote what the critics of Roman literature call a magnificent poem; but a poem in praise of atheism, addressed to the human heart, encased or not encased in Roman steel, is in conception a blunder. Praise it as much as you will, it remains hollow at the heart; it is a fine painting wasted on a wretched piece of pottery; a robe of bright Tyrian purple flung over the shoulders of a beggar. It has no reality. It is a brilliant piece of unreason. Southey's 'Kehama' and 'Thalaba' are fine poems, but they are poems only for philosophical thinkers, and students of foreign forms of faith; to the British public they have no reality, no interest; therefore they are not read. Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King' contain some of the finest writing in the English language; but who does not feel that if Arthur and his Knights had been as much of a strong, big-boned reality to England as Bruce and the Douglas are to Scotland, the poet would have had a

much firmer hold of popular sympathy by the fangs of this actuality, than he now has with all the elaborate art, all the curious felicity, and all the graceful simplicity of his diction? The short, simple story of 'Enoch Arden,' woven as it is out of the common yarn of a manly English seaman's life, and breathing in every line the living atmosphere of English strength, English endurance, and Christian gentleness, will find an echo in hundreds of hearts, for whom King Arthur and his heroes of the Round Table can never possess any interest beyond that of a tasteful phantasmagoria. A strong foundation of popular faith, and a breezy freshness of popular interest, are absolutely necessary for the complete success of a great picture or a great poem. The ethereal subtlety and the transcendental power of Percy Bysshe Shelley, are lost to the great mass of English readers by a deficiency in these two important respects. He is very grand; but he is neither English, nor earthly, nor even human. Who cares to unbind Prometheus from his Caucasian crucifixion at this time of day? Lord Byron startled for a season, but failed permanently to interest his readers, by his exotic tales of Turkish tyrants, Greek corsairs, and Albanian brigands; but when, in an age of travelling, he appealed to the permanent interest of travel in the human heart, he executed a work that will last. His 'Childe Harold' is a sort of sentimental *Odyssey*, and though its sentiment is often false, and its hero a mere shadow, this work will certainly survive, by its powerful descriptions of some of the most interesting scenes on which the great drama of human civilisation has been acted. 'Don Juan,' again, is a versified novel, and has all the real interest which belongs to the vivid and expert exhibition of any side of human life. There is something solid here to feed on, though certainly neither is the meat of the most nourishing

quality, nor the seasoning particularly salubrious. But the poet moves everywhere in this work with the most easy naturalness, and is marvellously honest. There is that dash of reality about his pictures, which in the hand of genius never fails to charm, and which even dulness finds it difficult altogether to make void of significance.

Reality, therefore, is what we are to seek for in Homer, if the Iliad be really the great work of epic art for which thirty centuries of consenting men have taken it ; and this reality, so far as the materials of the Homeric poetry are concerned, that is, everything in it not derived from the specific genius of the author, is expressed by the single word TRADITION. By tradition (*παράδοσις*), in the original sense of the word, we mean the delivery of anything or of any word from hand to hand, or from mouth to mouth ; but more popularly, in our language, we understand by this term the handing down of any sort of knowledge or opinion from generation to generation, without that fixation of testimony which the use of inscriptions and written documents insures. Now, tradition is of two kinds—religious and secular ;<sup>1</sup> and under these two categories, of course, must be comprehended all the poetic material which we find elaborated into classical shape in the great popular epics of early Greece. We shall first speak of the religious tradition. The Iliad is not a religious poem in any sense ; the Epic of the Greek generally indeed, as contrasted with that of the Hindoo, is essentially a secular Epic ;<sup>2</sup> but like every great poem, and every high

<sup>1</sup> Or, as the Germans call it, *Götter* | to maturity (*Deutsche Heldenage*. and *Heldenage*. Of these two, W. Grimm is of opinion that, when a people is independent and undisturbed by foreign aggression in the earliest stages of society, the former comes first | Göttingen, 1829, p. 335), which seems agreeable both to the progress of traditional literature, so far as known, and to the nature of the human mind.

<sup>2</sup> "No one can read either the

philosophy, it acknowledges the gods, and feels the gods, and works out its catastrophe under the constant providence and presidency of the gods. The religious element of the Iliad is patent to every eye, from the first great announcement—

*Διὸς τ' ἐτελείετο βουλή,*

to the hanging out of the two fateful scales in Olympus (lib. xxii. 209), by which the issue of the long-suspended struggle between the two adverse heroes is intimated. This clement consists of two parts: the devout feeling or piety of the persons who express the sentiment of the Epic, and the celestial company of the gods who are the object of that feeling. The existence of the former part in Homer has been denied by none; but the reality of the other, or of the gods as true gods and not mere men under an exalted and transfigured aspect, was denied in ancient times by a notorious Messenian called Euhemerus, whose opinions, though offensive alike to the mass and to men of real philosophical insight, found considerable currency among a certain class of thinkers, and have not been without their advocates in modern times, especially in France and England.<sup>1</sup> To Homer,

Rámíyana or Mahá-bhárata without feeling that they rise above the Homeric poems in this—that a deep religious meaning appears to underlie all the narrative, and that the wildest allegory may be intended to conceal a sublime moral, symbolizing the conflict between good and evil, and teaching the hopelessness of victory in so terrible a contest without purity of soul, self-abnegation, and the subjugation of the passions.”—Williams on *Indian Epic Poetry*, 1863, p. 47.

This religious element is no doubt what GIONERTI alludes to when he

says that the Oriental Epic is “*per ampiezza e maestà di gran largo superiore alla Greca*” (Del Bello, ch. 9). But the amplitude is rather a fault, and the majesty is so ill managed that it constantly passes into the absurd.

<sup>1</sup> Euhemerus flourished in the times of the early Macedonian kings, the immediate successors of Alexander the Great (Euseb. *Præpar. Eccl.* ii. 2, 29). The startling paradox of his work caused it to be extensively read, even by those who were far from being ready to assent to its doctrines; and the partial truth which belonged to it in its

however, and to the Greeks, as to the great mass of modern readers, who have no mythological theory to support, the Olympian personages in the Iliad are as distinctly marked off from the terrestrial, as the celestial figures in the upper region of a picture of the old Italian school are separated from the mortals in the lower.<sup>1</sup> We shall not therefore trouble ourselves with a formal refutation of the sceptical paradox of the Messenian in this place, who indeed received the just reward of his shallow irreverence by the surname of "Atheist," which he received from the ancient world,<sup>2</sup> and is sufficiently refuted by the question which a profound ancient thinker puts: "*If the gods of Homer are only men elevated into godship, whence did the persons who performed this act of deification derive the idea of the gods, into whose fellowship, with such transcendental demonstration of gratitude, they transferred their fellow-mortals?*"<sup>3</sup> Let us therefore say plainly, that in Homer there is everywhere present a real worship of real gods, that is, of superhuman personages who

application to the heroes and demigods by the fatal facility of human logic, often sufficed to give it a show of universal validity. It was honoured by a translation into Latin from the pen of the poet Ennius (Cic. *Nat. Deor.* i. 42). The influence of the opinions of Euhemerus is easily traced in many chapters of Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Diodorus Siculus. The principal advocates of Euhemerus in modern times were Banier and Faber.

<sup>1</sup> When Mr. Grote says (Part i. chap. 16,) that "gods and men are undistinguishable in Grecian antiquity," he must either be a Euhemerist, which he certainly is not, or he must mean that there is a certain dim borderland of Hellenic myth in which

it is difficult to distinguish a man from a god and a god from a man. In this sense I allow the dictum, but exactly in the same way that I admit a certain range of low organic life, in which it is impossible to distinguish a plant from an animal. Nevertheless, in the gross, a plant is a plant and an animal is an animal, with a distinctiveness which no sophistry can confound.

<sup>2</sup> Even from some of the Fathers (Εὐημέρου τοῦ δθεωτάτου.—Theoph. *ad Autol.* iii. 7.), though these writers generally looked with favour on atheists of this class as among their most efficient allies in attacking idolatry.

<sup>3</sup> Sextus Empiricus adv. Math. lib. viii. Genev. 1621, p. 314.

really represent divine power in some shape ; and we may assert further, with the most perfect truth, and as one leading characteristic of the Homeric poetry, that the attitude of the poet in reference to the national theology, which his works exhibit, was purely receptive, and his function merely representative. No doubt, there have been poets in all ages who have written under an inspiration of polemical hostility to the faith of the people whose language their works have adorned. Lucretius, already mentioned, Byron, Shelley, and Euripides, are familiar examples of this type. But this is neither the natural position of poetry, nor is it a position possible to be held by a truly national and a widely popular poet, such as Homer is on all hands admitted to have been. Poetry, as the general term for purified and culminating emotion, of course comprehends piety, or devout feeling, as the most vital part of itself ; and this devout feeling, in a normal state of society, will always attach itself with a kindly and uncritical sympathy to the forms of religious worship and the objects of religious faith acknowledged in the atmosphere to which it belongs. No true poet is naturally a sceptic. Under exceptional circumstances only he may be forced into a sceptical position, but he will never be either comfortable or complete till he has found a faith of some kind or other as the natural keystone of sustainment to the ideal structure of his thoughts. But Homer was not merely a poet composing a poem for himself, as poets now do, and flinging it abroad on the chance of catching a certain set of sympathizing readers ; he was a popular minstrel, in an age when books and readers were unknown, wandering from town to town, and singing or reciting his works mostly by independent parts, for popular entertainment. That a poet so circumstanced should do otherwise than simply accept

the gods and religious belief of his country, is impossible. He was not at liberty, in those early times, to do even what Pindar sometimes did,<sup>1</sup> viz., express his disbelief in certain current legends about the gods, because they seemed unworthy, and adopt others more in harmony with his conceptions of the Divine nature. A lyrical poet, speaking in his own person in a literary and philosophical age, might assume such a position ; but by an Epic poet in an early stage of society, such a critical freedom with the materials of religious tradition could not be exercised, and, we may rest assured, was never desired. The only freedom that Homer had with regard to the old Hellenic gods, was to give due prominence to those whom the proprieties of his story required to be put in the foreground, and to invest, with the greatest dignity of pictured speech, those who, in the traditional tale which he told, had already received the position of dignity which grew out of the circumstances. The bard of such a poem as the Iliad could neither take away from a prominent god any characteristic which naturally belonged to him, nor add any feature to a portrait which in the popular imagination lived already complete. In the one case his auditors would have missed what was familiar, in the other they would have resented what was strange. If Vulcan had thin shanks, like an earthly smith, he must continue to have them ; Juno could not look on Jupiter but with her large, full, and deep cow-eyes ; Jove must have his eagle, and Venus her girdle. Only a certain power of amplifying and enlarging and painting out in harmony with what already existed in the popular mind,—so much liberty might safely belong to a popular minstrel, and no doubt was largely exercised. In this sense only can we allow the truth of the famous sentence of

<sup>1</sup> Εστι δ' αὐδρὶ φάμεν ἐσκέδε ἀμφὶ δαιμόνων καλά—μειών γάρ αἰτία.—Ol. i. Str. 2.

Herodotus,<sup>1</sup> that “Homer and Hesiod made the gods for the Greeks.” Beyond the decorative function of fancy, and the natural infection caught from a lofty imagination, we cannot believe that the gods of Greece derived anything from Homer. Afterwards, no doubt, he became the sacred conservator of the type of celestial personages whose forms he had exhibited with such skill. His works became the Greek Bible, and their author the great Greek theologian; but he was a theologian only accidentally, because he was a great Epic poet, and with the materials of the Bible which he presented to his countrymen—though scarcely with the notion that it ever would become a Bible—he had as little to do as the maid who plaits a wreath for a bride has with the flowers from which it is made.

Our view of the relation of Homer to the religious tradition of his country, is therefore simply this, that his works are a true mirror of the theology and the piety of the Hellenes in his time, and that he himself had a full, honest faith in the Polytheistic creed which he represented, and was neither above nor below it in the religious platform which he personally occupied. Of course it is a difficult thing to look into a man’s heart; but there is something in the sincerity of religious conviction which no hypocrite has ever been able to counterfeit; and apart from the obvious necessity of his position, there are other considerations, which may fitly be stated against those who seem inclined to believe, that however true the picture of Heathen theology given by Homer is in the main, there are yet particular passages which prove that he was far elevated above it, and

<sup>1</sup> II. 53.—‘*Ἡσίοδον γὰρ καὶ Ὅμηρον*’ “*Ἐλλῆσι, καὶ τοῖσι θεοῖσι τὰς ἐπωνυμίας ἡλικίην τετρακοσίους ἔτεσι δακέω μεν δόντες καὶ τιμᾶς τε καὶ τέχνας διελόντες, προεβυτέρους γενέσθαι, καὶ οὐ πλέοντι, καὶ εἴδεα αὐτῶν σημήναντες. οὐτοις δέ εἰσι οἱ ποιησαντες θεογονίην*

some, perhaps, through which we seem to see him laughing in his sleeve at the objects of the faith which in the main scope of his book he so reverentially depicts. As to those places in which he has been conceived to play the Lucian,<sup>1</sup> I would observe in general how unnatural it is to fling a Voltaire into the position of a Tasso ; and with regard to those particular passages where the Homeric mention of divine things excites in our minds a sensation of the ludicrous, it seems sufficient to remark that this sensation is seldom absent from the mind of any person firmly believing in one creed, who steadfastly contemplates the objects in which the adherent of another creed no less firmly believes. The ludicrous, according to Aristotle's well-known remark, lies on the surface ; and as most people see only the outside of all foreign forms of faith, they necessarily see them in somewhat of a ludicrous light. Xenophon, Plutarch, Pausanias, and other heathen writers, no less remarkable for piety than for learning and intelligence, are constantly making assertions with reference to points of ancient religious faith, which it is impossible for us, in our strongly contrasted position, to read without a smile. But to conclude that because we laugh at the Homeric gods, in the way that an infidel may laugh, therefore Homer himself laughed at them,

<sup>1</sup> Mure, in his *Critical History of the Literature of Ancient Greece*, 1850 (i. 486), commenting on the "improprieties" exhibited in the conduct of the Olympian personages in Homer, remarks, "The only reasonable explanation or vindication of these passages is to assume their object to be satirical. They reflect partly the poet's own disposition to banter the extravagance of the popular theology, partly the inclination of the Greek public of

all ages to extract materials of jest from the objects of gravest interest." This last remark is quite true; an ancient Greek was not like a modern Presbyterian, and could enjoy his theological joke without injury to his devout feeling ; but this is quite a different thing from the conscious purpose to satirize the objects of popular faith, supposed to exist in the mind of an epic minstrel belonging to the earliest age of popular culture.

is to display a complete want of that faculty of dramatic transposition on which all sound criticism depends. More respect, perhaps, is due to that other aspect of the discrepancy between Homer's personal creed, and that of the vulgar Hellenes, which supposes him giving expression to lofty conceptions of divine things from the elevated throne of his own genius, seriously, and without any humorous sidelong glance at the low vices of popular mythology. "It is true," says Clinton, in combating some of Müller's views with regard to the religion of the Dorians; "it is true that the Jupiter and Apollo of the Iliad are often described with striking attributes of divine power, *but these are only the lofty conceptions of the poet's own mind.*"<sup>1</sup> And in a similar vein the late Archdeacon Williams, who, on a more curious perusal, was surprised to find "most of the essential principles of Christianity in the Iliad,"<sup>2</sup> seems unable to comprehend how such a wonderful exhibition of theological wisdom should have proceeded from a heathen poet, except on the supposition that this knowledge had come to him externally by tradition from the Hebrew patriarchs. This is an old and favourite fancy of certain ill-instructed Christian advocates, borrowed from the Church Fathers, to derive everything that is good in any great heathen author from Moses, as if God had only one channel of communicating noble thoughts to mortal men, and that channel was through the Hebrews. But in what, after all, consists the superior wisdom here spoken of, which it is presumed the great poet of the Iliad could not have held in common with the mass of the ignorant heathen herd whom he addressed? Clinton specializes nothing; but Williams, in a long paraphrase of four hundred pages, has

<sup>1</sup> *Fast. Hellen.*, Introd. p. xiv.

<sup>2</sup> *Homerus.* By the Rev. P. Williams, A.M. London, 1842, Preface, p. vi.

set forth the doctrine that the Iliad is an exoteric poem, exemplifying the mode in which a great nation is signally punished for national sins.<sup>1</sup> And substantially to the same effect, Granville Penn, in his work, published twenty years before the Archdeacon's, had remarked that "the primary and governing argument of the Iliad, co-extensive with its extent, running through all its length, and reaching to its extreme termination, is the *sure and irresistible power of the divine will over the most resolute and determined will of man, exemplified in the death and burial of Hector by the instrumentality of Achilles, as the immediate preliminary to the destruction of Troy.*"<sup>2</sup> Now, without discussing the argument of the Iliad, for which we are not yet prepared, it may be safely granted that the exhibition of divine justice in the person of Paris, the violator of the sacred rights of hospitality, is, if not the direct object, at least one of the strong under-motives of the whole moral economy of the Iliad. The *Διὸς τ' ἐτελείετο θουλή* certainly included that.<sup>3</sup> But what I cannot see is the necessity of calling in Christianity and Comparative Philology in full panoply to explain a matter so fundamental, so obvious, and so universally human as this. The sense of justice resides naturally in the breasts of all men who have not by some strange mishap straggled off from the ordered ranks of humanity, and sunk into the brotherhood of the brute; and the idea of divine retribution following on actions by which this principle is grossly violated, grows out of this sense as naturally as a fruit does from a flower. The moral economy of the Iliad, if it be really what Williams

<sup>1</sup> *Homerus*, p. 118.

<sup>2</sup> *An Examination of the Primary Argument of the Iliad*. By Granville Penn. London, 1821.

<sup>3</sup> *The remarks of KEBLE (Praelectiones*

*Academica, Oxon., Prael. xv.)* on the religious element in Homer, are characterized by his usual pure feeling and sound judgment. Those of BLAIR (Lect. xliii.) are also excellent.

represents it, is so far from requiring Christianity to explain it, that, in my opinion, it could not be a human and a reasonable composition at all on any other foundation. The sublimity of certain passages of the *Iliad*, where the divine power is introduced, I do not deny; but I see nothing in these passages which, in point of religious sentiment—for I do not speak of mere poetic presentation—elevates them above the common level of devout thought among a quick and susceptible people like the Greeks. On the contrary, I feel rather impressed by a certain puerile, or almost infantine tone of conception in the popular faith, from which the poet with all the lofty poise of his eagle wing cannot escape, from which, perhaps I should say, he nowhere shows any desire to escape. For the childlike reverence with which he was bound to the gods of his fathers made even their absurdities sacred in his eyes, and saved their puerilities from contempt.<sup>1</sup>

But assuming the perfect honesty of Homer's religious convictions, and the complete correspondence of his creed with the received belief of the ancient Greeks, so far as it goes, we may still be permitted to ask, whether it comprehends everything, whether it gives a complete picture of old Hellenic piety, or whether there may not be some important religious element in the background, of which Homer, the secular minstrel, not the sacred psalmist, gives no indication.

Do we learn from Homer alone all that can be learned of

<sup>1</sup> From a purely modern point of view, Hayley, in his *Essay on Epic Poetry*, said justly enough :

" Yet if by fits the mighty Homer nods,  
When sinks he more than with his sleepy  
gods!"

only for "sleepy" he ought to have said "squabbling," as the only god

who sleeps in the *Iliad* when he should have been awake is Jove, and that only on an extraordinary occasion. With *DE LA MOTTE* also, whose whole point of view is quite modern and French, the deportment of the gods in the *Iliad* is one of the grand heads of offence (*Oeuvres*, 1754, vol. ii. p. 22).

ancient Greek theology? Was Homer himself participant of all the highest religious culture of which, as a Greek, in those early times, he was capable? To answer these questions we must inquire whether there are any existing sources from which any sure indication of a pre-Homeric theology can be obtained, and specially, whether the famous Eleusinian, or other mysteries, supposing them to have existed in Homer's time, revealed to the initiated any religious knowledge more elevated and more reasonable than what is exhibited to the vulgar eye in the secular cantos of the Iliad.

That a pre-Homeric literature, not written, of course, but sung, and with it a pre-Homeric theology, existed, the whole course of early ancient history, and the whole character of the Greek language used by Homer distinctly prove; but where are we to find it? First of all, perhaps, in Homer himself, just as we find the fragments of an older formation embedded in a later stratum among the many rocky and earthy coats which form the superficial engirdment of our globe. And unquestionably we do stumble here and there in the Iliad on strange physico-theological allusions, the matter of which does not seem to fit naturally into the thoroughly anthropomorphised celestial aristocracy of which the thunder-loving Jove is the head. That familiar line, for instance—

*Ωκεανὸν τε θεῶν γένεσιν καὶ μήτερα Τηθύν :*  
*Ocean whence gods have their birth, and Tethys the mother primeval,*

transporting us, as it does with a word, into that pre-Jovian era of which *Æschylus* has made such grand use in his *Prometheus*, is certainly a part of an archaic elemental theology which afterwards appeared in the shape of the sage sentences of *Thales*, the philosophical poetry of *Empedocles*, and the

mystical verses of the Orphic hymns. To the same source, I agree with Creuzer, may justly be referred the curious legend about the rebellion of the other Olympians against Jove in Iliad I. 396;<sup>1</sup> and the sharp vision of that profound theological mythologist may detect similar fragments in other places, where to our broad British view they are not so manifest. But the principal source from which a knowledge of a pre-Homeric theology may now be gained, is the description of Greece by the pious old topographer Pausanias, a work from which more is to be learned of the remotest Greek antiquity than from all other sources combined. The intelligent reader will readily understand how, with the conservatism natural to all religious observances, in the remote glens of Arcadia, Bœotia, and Argolis, many singular and characteristic sacred usages existed even in the days of the Roman emperors, which bore on their face an antiquity by not a few centuries transcending the earliest age which has been assigned to Homer. Above all, the oldest and most venerated images of the gods, in the most hallowed shrines, continued to bear an unfaltering testimony to the archaic and quaintly symbolical theology of an age long anterior to the time when the light play of the poet's fancy, and the skilful touch of the sculptor's chisel, had combined to submit the whole hereditary types of Greek faith to the laws of a symmetrical beauty, and the demands of a human similitude. Take as an example the following account of an ancient image of Jove, as seen by Pausanias, in the Acropolis of Argos:—

“ On the summit of the Larissa there is a temple of Jove, sur-named the Larissæan, without a roof; but the image of the god, made

<sup>1</sup> “ In dieser Stelle zeigt sich das Durchscheinen inhaltsreicher symbolischer Lehre.”—*Symbolik*, vol. iii. p. 66.

of wood, was not standing on its pedestal. There is also a temple of Minerva worthy of being seen ; in this there are many votive monuments, and among others a carved image of Jove, with three eyes, one in the mid forehead, the two others where we naturally have them. This Jove, they say, was the family Jove of Laomedon, which had its place in the open court of his palace ; and when Troy was taken by the Greeks, it was to the altar of this Jove that Priam fled. But when the spoils were divided, this image fell to the lot of Sthenelus, the son of Capaneus, who dedicated it in this place. As to its having three eyes, the reason of this may be readily guessed. For that Jove reigneth in heaven is the common belief of all men ; but that the ruler of the subterranean realms also beareth this designation, the verse of Homer doth aptly testify—

*Ζεὺς δὲ καταχθόνιος καὶ ἐπανὴ Περοεφόνεια.*

And again, *Aeschylus* the son of Euphorion calleth the ruler of the sea also by the name of Jove. It seemeth plain, therefore, that the maker of this image, whoever he was, gave three eyes to one face, indicating that it was one god, who, under three different designations, ruled over three different realms.”<sup>1</sup>

A similar archaic character is presented in the image of the sable Demeter, as it was worshipped in a sacred cave by the Phigilians :—

“ Now the Phigilians keep this cave sacred to Demeter, and they have placed in it an image of the goddess, carved in wood, after this fashion. The figure sitteth upon a rock, and hath the shape of a woman in all parts, save only the head ; but the head hath the mane of a horse, and close to it there grow the likenesses of snakes and other wild beasts. The robe with which the image is clothed goeth down so as to cover the whole feet ; and in one hand the goddess holdeth a dolphin, in the other a pigeon. Now, with what

<sup>1</sup> *Pausan. II. 24. 4.*—This is one of the passages quoted by those who wish to maintain that the Greeks had a proper triumvirate or Trinity in their theology, concerning which notion see notes to II. iv. 288, *infra*, vol. iii.

significance the image was made after this fashion, a man of a sound understanding and of a good memory needeth not to be told ; and she is called sable, plainly from the colour of the garment which she weareth.”<sup>1</sup>

The same Arcadian people had, as is told in the preceding chapter, an image of a sort of mermaid goddess, half-woman, half-fish, under the name of Eury nome, whose name also occurs in Homer (Il. xviii. 398). These instances, a few out of many that might be adduced, may be sufficient to illustrate the general statement that there was unquestionably an old theology among the Greeks, of which we receive only accidental and involuntary indications from Homer ; for there is not the slightest reason to believe that the blithe old minstrel had any distinct consciousness of the changes of religious usage and sacred type which had taken place previous to his day, or cared to inquire what was old and what was new in the rich tissue of theological legend with which the human story of the fall of Troy was interwoven. But the important question of course remains : Of what nature was this pre-Homeric theology, and have we any reason to suppose that it contained elements which render Homer a partial and imperfect expositor of the religious faith of the Hellenes in its purest days ? Here we are met by the doctrine of Creuzer, that “the Greek theology strayed from an original feeling of divine unity into a belief in multiplicity, and returned afterwards, through the influence of poets and philosophers, to the point from which it started.”<sup>2</sup> Now, in reference to this matter, the whole history of polytheistic idolatry in Greece and India, and elsewhere, wherever we

<sup>1</sup> Pausan. viii. 42. 3.—The caution | bolts were explained in the ceremonies observed by the writer in indicating | of the Eleusinian mysteries, and could the significance of this symbolical | not be divulged.  
image, shows, I presume, that the sym-

<sup>2</sup> *Symbolik*, vol. i. p. 46. 1836.

have an opportunity of tracing it, distinctly shows a tendency to multiplication ; so that the farther back we follow any mythological system, the simpler do its elements appear ; and these elements, in all cases, are the grand original elements of nature themselves, by which we are surrounded, on which we stand, through which we exist, and by means of which we energize, that is to say, as Plato expressly witnesses both of the Greeks and the Barbarians, the heavens, the earth, the sea, the rivers, the sun, the moon, the stars, and the dark region of subterranean fire and commotion.<sup>1</sup> But whether in the special case of the Greeks we have any trustworthy grounds for laying down the proposition that the multiplicity of their Olympian personages originally started from an absolute unity, that is, from a primitive Pelasgic monotheism, this, I must confess, notwithstanding my respect for the profound and capacious genius of Creuzer, is a point on which I do not feel at all clear. I should perhaps rather be inclined to assume the doctrine propounded by the old Boeotian theologer as a historical fact, and say that the polytheism of the Greeks commenced with the dualism of *Oὐρανὸς* and *Γῆ*—Heaven and Earth,—and, under the influence of the anthropomorphic principle, branched naturally out into the full complement of the thoroughly humanized Olympian clanship that we find in Homer. For the gods, of course, the great source of all generation, could not be childless ; and their children would be gods also. But this is a section of the great chapter of beginnings, on which no wise man will hastily dogmatize. Those who hold with Creuzer on this point—a point of vital importance to our estimate of Homer as a complete interpreter of Hellenic faith—will probably maintain that the doctrine of the divine unity, obscured before Homer's

<sup>1</sup> *Cratylus*, 397, D.

time, and by the influence of his poetry hopelessly disguised, was communicated to the most ancient Pelasgi by those high priests and hierophants of their most sacred mysteries, who brought their wisdom with the great stream of European civilisation from the East. To this theory I have no great objection; only I do not see, in the case of the Greeks at least, the possibility of proving it. For if we assert that all nations must have taken a knowledge of the Divine unity with them out of paradise, this argument is doubly defective; *first*, as it is addressed only to orthodox Christians, and is deprived of all scientific value to a disbeliever in the infallibility of the Books of Moses; and, *second*, even upon the foundation of the literal truth of the Mosaic narrative, who can say what judicial blindness in reference to divine matters may not have fallen on Adam and Eve, on their expulsion from Eden, and much more on the curse-branded, outlawed, and vagabond generation of Cain? Apart from such corner-stone of primeval historical tradition, I see no scientific ground on which a belief in the divine unity among the pre-Homeric Greeks can be placed; unless, indeed, we be content with the general assertion that this great truth, more or less, is virtually contained in all forms of idolatry—in which case, however, Homer himself is a monotheist,<sup>1</sup>—or with the equally vague belief that, as Strabo says of the Jews, mankind universally proceed from good to bad in the course of religious tradition;<sup>2</sup> or, finally, unless we see clearly in the Orphic hymns, and in the Eleusinian and other mysteries, a continued teaching of the most sublime religious truths derived from the earliest times, mysti-

<sup>1</sup> A virtual monotheism is, in fact, implied in the doctrine of the absolute supremacy of Zeus. On which see my Notes on Il. i. 5, 175, and viii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> τὰς μὲν ἀρχὰς λαβόντες οὐ φάντας ἔκτραπλενοι ἐπὶ τὸ χεῖρον.—xvi. 762.

cally mingled with pantheistic dreams and subtle juggleries of the polytheistic imagination. The relation of the great father of epic poetry to the most sacred rites of Hellenic religion in later times, is a question that has been often raised, but is unfortunately much less capable of a perfectly satisfactory solution than the much debated question about the nature of these mysteries themselves. Mr. Fynes Clinton, whose opinion must always command respect, agrees with Lobeck in saying that "the assumption that mystical religion existed in Greece from the very first, and in the earliest ages, is refuted by the silence of Homer, and by the absence of all testimony."<sup>1</sup> But the argument from silence is one which ought always to be used with the greatest caution, and on which the progress of critical scholarship has taught us to lay less and less weight. Neither the genius of the minstrel, nor the subject of his great poems, led him into the region where the dim religious light of secret mysteries might lend an awful significance to the exhibition of symbols which the glare of common day overwhelmed. Homer, as already said, was essentially a secular poet. He walked in the sun, and his communion was with men who spoke and acted with a bold freedom in the sight of gods, who mingled with them publicly, and revealed themselves to their special favourites in the open field. A poet may be the universally acknowledged spokesman of a nation in secular matters, and yet fail to bring prominently forward some of the more secret and awful rites of the national religion. Walter Scott's poems are essentially Scotch—Scotch in their scenery, their character, and their action; but the peculiar character and hue of Scottish piety, as it has been typed in Scotland now for more than

<sup>1</sup> *Fast. Hellen.*, Introd. p. xii.

three hundred years, never appears there. "Even in the Scottish ballads," says Professor Aytoun, "though there are frequent allusions to the mass, to the virtue of holy water, and to the power of bells, yet on the whole the allusions to religious ceremonies are less numerous than we might expect."<sup>1</sup> Nothing more natural. The minstrels were not priests by profession, and, though living in a religious atmosphere, their sympathies generally were far from sacerdotal, and the heroes of their popular songs anything but saints. Let us therefore not press Homer too hard on the utter want of an Orphic element in his poems, and his great silence on the mysteries. The Orphic element, which has to do "with powers and with the mingling of elements, not with persons and with actions,"<sup>2</sup> was essentially foreign to his genius and his theme; and as to the mysteries, it is not exactly true that he altogether ignores them; at least he distinctly mentions Dionysus, a god intimately connected with the Eleusinian rites, introducing him in one of those strange, uncouth legends, which so strongly marked his worship both in its original country, Thrace, and in Boeotia.<sup>3</sup> It must be borne in mind, also, that Herodotus evidently thought the mysteries of Ceres very ancient; for he derives them from Egypt, and says they fell into disuse in the Peloponnesus after the Dorian invasion.<sup>4</sup> We shall therefore wisely abstain from drawing any conclusions from the silence of Homer with regard to these mysterious rites, deeming it more consistent with the history of religious faith to believe that the most solemn and consummating rites of national piety would

<sup>1</sup> Aytoun's *Scottish Ballads*. Introd. p. 47. <sup>2</sup> *und Handlungen Homerisch*.—Creuzer, *Symbolik*, vol. i. p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> ll. vi. 130. <sup>4</sup> ll. 171.—See Proller, *Demeter und Persephone*, 1837, p. 147.

<sup>1</sup> "Von Kräften und Mischungen zu singen war Orphisch, von Personen

be coeval with the faith in the divine power of those most gracious influences of which these rites were the channel. If Ceres was worshipped in Homer's time, of which there seems no doubt, I shall believe that her mysteries existed also, for the same reason that the institution of the Christian sacraments was coeval with the foundation of the Christian Church. But however this be, it certainly has not yet been made out with any sort of clearness that there was any teaching of divine things by the hierophants at Eleusis or Samothrace, or elsewhere, which opened up to the devout Hellenic worshipper a theological vista more far-reaching than was open to the bard of the *Iliad*. The mysteries, in fact, taught nothing; they only exhibited symbols of what was already known and universally believed; and through means of those symbols, accompanied as they were with a solemn course of pious purifications and religious exercises, produced a strong impression on the devout spectator.<sup>1</sup> In this way their operation seems to have been exactly similar to that of our Eucharistic sacrament. The sacramental service, whether chanted in a Romish cathedral, and set forth with the gilded pomp of an imposing ceremonial, or enforced with solemn exhortations and severe exercises, as at a Presbyterian communion-table, teaches nothing; but it is often the means of making the dulled sense alive to the importance of what is old, and giving wings to him that creepeth. If, in the Eleusinian mysteries, we say that the devout Hellenic worshipper was, as the final result of a long train of well-

<sup>1</sup> Mitford is in nothing further wrong about the Greek religion than when he says, "In Greece two religions prevailed." This notion seems to me to have arisen from overrating the significance of the oath of secrecy taken by the initiated, which was only a so- | lennly pronounced expression of that feeling of reticence which every pious believer has towards the stranger who is inclined to pity or deride his creed. On this healthy *pudor* of pious feeling, KEBBLE (*Prolect.* vol. i. p. 62) has some excellent remarks.

devised religious shows and exercises, made keenly alive to the Divine creative and sustaining power exhibited in the earth as the mother of all growth, and to the great miracle of life in the recurrent energy of the seasons, and the mystic virtue of the seed, which must die before it can live, and be buried in darkness before it is capable of expanding in the light ; if further he was taught, anticipating the doctrinal illustration of our Lord and of St. Paul,<sup>1</sup> to look on the mysterious process of life-evolving death in that seed as the type of an immortality reserved for the good among men, in a brighter world, after the corruption of the tomb shall have been endured ; we shall in these terms, I imagine, have included all that can be said in favour of the religious teaching, or rather the religious influences, of the mysteries, by scholars who are willing to deal soberly with the existing testimonies on the subject ; and we shall at the same time have said nothing that was excluded from the personal faith of Homer, or from the general religion of the Hellenes, of which his poetry was the exponent.<sup>2</sup>

So much for the religious element of the pre-Homeric tradition. What remains involves more difficult considerations, and not less important results. In Homer, as on the whole a faithful interpreter of old Hellenic religion, few or none will be inclined to doubt ; and if any should doubt, for them the real nature of the Greek faith and its living power can be exhibited, not in such a pleasing form certainly, but with equal truth,

<sup>1</sup> John xii. 24 ; 1 Cor. xv. 36.

<sup>2</sup> On the mysteries, the principal authorities will be found in Lobeck's *Aglaophamus* (1829), vol. i., one of the most masterly works of the great German school of scholarship, combining the most accurate learning with sound judgment, philosophical grasp, and

systematic completeness. The attitude of the author to Creuzer and his school is decidedly polemical, imparting a certain bias to his work, of which the cautious student will beware. One may accept his facts, and agree with his general statement of the case, without indorsing his tone.

from an immense variety of the most trustworthy sources. But if any one denies that the Homeric poems contain trustworthy historic materials, he not only robs these works of their principal value in the eyes of many modern readers, but he proceeds on a principle which, if consistently applied, will deprive the world of great treasures of inherited belief, which the wisest of men, age after age, have been willing to accept for knowledge. Of course, if truth demand this sacrifice, there is no harm. To be robbed wholesale of huge bales of windy lies, to a philosophical mind may justly wear the aspect of a kindness. But in such cases it is always necessary to inquire carefully whether what we possess as long-valued treasure be really wind or weighty bullion. To me it appears that in the present age there is a tendency to fling away honest old traditions in the slump as utterly worthless, and to substitute ingenious speculations in their stead. But before we allow ourselves to be carried away by such a fashion of sweeping negation, we were wise to make a large and cautious survey of the character of the ground on which we stand. It may be after all that there is more solidity at the root of venerable old popular belief, than in the ingenious theory of our recent speculator. The thinking of the multitude is not always wrong. If the mass of the people are liable to be deceived by what feeds their patriotism and glorifies their virtues, the individual scholar or thinker is no less open to an opposite class of delusions which flatter his vanity, and increase his sense of intellectual power. When a man with a large display of reading rejects as a figment what all other men for centuries had received as a fact, there is an air of knowledge about this, before which the man of less reading or of no reading is often willing to surrender without inquiry. But such a surrender of the in-

herited riches of the past at the command of imperious scepticism would in many cases be most unreasonable. No learning, however extensive, no ingenuity, however subtle, no imagination, however brilliant, will help a man to the apprehension of real fact, whether in historical tradition or in any other domain, unless the virtue of a supreme love of truth be present with an invariable polarity in his breast. We shall therefore set ourselves to inquire into this matter with no presumption in favour of fashionable historical negation, with no assumption of a gift of critical divination, which claims to re-construct a lost history of the past, after putting aside all the testimony on which any history is based. We shall proceed on the belief that while all men are liable to credulity, to believe too much of what favours their own views, gratifies their own passions, and strengthens their own party, no man is entitled to advance a claim for superior wisdom by the possession of a mere lawyer-like dexterity, which delights in exposing accidental flaws in the evidence of plain and substantial witnesses, in order that it may substitute an ingenious but altogether baseless and uncertified theory of its own.

Homer's *Iliad* is not a mere poem, in the modern sense of that word,—a work of the imagination, which may be founded on fact, but which is given out by the writer, and accepted by the reader, as a fiction. In the days of the great father of Greek poetry, what we call prose composition did not exist; verse was the only form of known and accredited record. In this form all the knowledge of the age appeared; not only all the thoughts, the passions, the feelings; the aspirations, but all the most plain and commonplace facts as well; the observations of the seasons, the work of the farmer, the place of the stars, the soundings of the seaman, the

statistics of army and navy, the proverbial wisdom of the village calendar, the policy of kings, and the economics of swineherding—all this, along with the worship of the gods and the exploits of great national heroes, formed the solid body of what was called poetry in Homer's day: a most utilitarian and practical affair in all points, meant as a literal fact by the minstrel who sang it, and accepted as such by his hearers without reserve.<sup>1</sup> Now with respect to all this mass of finely-harmonized popular tradition, which we call the *Iliad* and *Odysssey*, the proposition I wish to prove is that the materials of these poems, so far as they assume the human and the narrative form, are in their root and scope historical materials; in other words, that there was a kingdom of Priam, wealthy and powerful, on the coast of the Dardanelles; that there was a great naval expedition undertaken against this Asiatic dynasty by the combined forces of the European Greeks and some of the Asiatic islanders, under the leadership of Agamemnon, king of Mycenæ; that there was a real Achilles, chief of a warlike clan in the Thessalian Phthiotis, and a real quarrel betwixt him and the general-in-chief of the Hellenic armament; that this quarrel brought about the most disastrous results to the Greek host, in the first place, and had nearly caused the failure of the expedition; but that afterwards, a reconciliation having been effected, a series of brilliant achievements followed, which issued soon after in the capture of the great Asiatic capital; that all these events were of such a nature as to imprint themselves with the deepest lines in

<sup>1</sup> The proof of this lies specially in Hesiod's *Works and Days*, and in the whole body of the gnomic and didactic poetry of the ancients. With this character of Greek and Roman

poetry harmonizes the appearance of the Carthaginian bard at the feast of Dido (*Aeneid* 1. 740), who sings to the harp what we should call a lecture on astronomy and meteorology.

the memory of the Hellenic race; that the facts connected with them, and especially the characters and exploits of the principal actors, were drawn from the life by the original minstrels who accompanied the army, and belonged, as recognised historiographers, to the retinue of the chiefs, were handed down from generation to generation through a succession of bards specially trained for this work of musical tradition, till at length they came into the hands of Homer, who combined them into an organic whole, by that unity of plan which only mind can create, and that vividness of touch which only genius can impart. The grounds on which this conviction rests I will try to set forth at some length; not only because it seems of importance strongly to assert the value of ancient tradition in the present day, by way of counteraction to the sceptical tendencies so largely at work, but because I feel convinced that no sound criticism of Homer, as the first of epic poets, can proceed on any other foundation than on a firm faith that he is one of the most honest, and in substantials one of the most trustworthy of historians.

Our first question here must be a general one: Of what materials is historical tradition composed, as distinguished from contemporaneous written document and authentic guarantee? and this we must endeavour to gather from an induction sufficiently wide to guard against hasty and one-sided conclusions. But, by way of postulate, let us first endeavour to understand what the real value of written evidence is as opposed to tradition. There is a prejudice in the minds of some people in favour of written evidence, merely because it is written, which amounts to a superstition. It is quite certain that, merely as written evidence, evidence of any kind is not a whit better than oral. A man

may write a lie as readily as he may speak it. The traditional unwritten character of a Nero or a Claverhouse in the minds of a people, may, after the lapse of centuries, be more true than the written and printed testimonies of the friends and partisans of those persons whose evidence is contemporary. The value of printed or written evidence depends not only on its being coeval with the facts, but on the position of accurate and impartial observation which the witnesses occupy. Nothing is more natural, therefore, than that the oral tradition of a people, after three or four centuries, or even thousands of years, should in many cases be more true to the real character of the fact than the written testimony of this or that contemporary witness. The oral testimony of a whole people, confirmed as it often is by existing circumstances, may be of such a nature as that no person can possibly believe it to be a lie. Mere figments have no power in them to beget facts of a certain consistence and solidity. On the other hand, the written testimony of this or that individual, writing under the influence of particular notions, may be so utterly worthless that no one can possibly believe it to be true. With this explanation, let us proceed to examine one or two obvious instances of the character of popular tradition, which may serve broadly as a measure of the amount of historical truth that one may reasonably expect to find in such a poem as the *Iliad*.

At Scarborough, a place whose ruined castle, on the point of a strong jutting cliff, indicates a military position that in an age of civil turmoil could not readily be overlooked, there is pointed out a flat-topped, conical hill in the vicinity of the town, where it is said Cromwell encamped at the time when, in the great rebellion, the castle of Scarborough suffered siege. This is the tradition of the place. But on

looking at the topographical authorities, we learn from Parliamentary papers that Cromwell was not there at the period implied, and, in fact, never could have been there, as at that time he was conducting military operations in another part of the country.<sup>1</sup> Here is a plain case of local and oral tradition at issue with authentic written evidence ; but what points does the issue touch ? Only this, that at the siege of a particular castle, at a certain date in the great civil war, the future head of the great English commonwealth, and virtual king of the British empire, was not bodily present. This, however, is a comparatively small matter ; the triple fact remains, that there was a great civil war in England between the Crown and the Commons at the time specified ; that in this war the castle of Scarborough was an object of contention between the parties ; and that in the same war a man called Oliver Cromwell was one of the principal generals of the popular party. Nay, may we not infer another important fact also from the popular tradition in this case—that Cromwell was the most able general on this side, so able that, in the popular imagination, no notable exploit in the war could be conceived as having been performed without his presence ? In the main, therefore, the memory of the people with respect to this matter has proved itself faithful, and their voice is true ; and this is what I assert of the persons and facts in Homer's *Iliad*, and nothing more. Take another instance. In the beautiful Bay of Wigton, looking southwards towards the peaks of the English Lakes and northwards to the bare crowns of the Galloway Highlands, there is a quiet old town with a hill behind it, and an old grey church-yard sloping down towards the sea, and on the hill there is a

<sup>1</sup> Hinderwell's *History of Scarborough*, original edition, p. 17. Theakstone's *Scarborough Guide*, p. 16.

recent granite monument clean and white, and in the church-yard there is an old sepulchral stone grey and moss-grown, and both these stone witnesses stand there to hand down to posterity the flagrant sin of a cabal of courtly parasites, who, under the form of law, and with the sanction of religion, conspired against the liberties of the country, trampled on the rights of conscience, invaded the privacies of domestic piety, waded through innocent blood, and on the beach of this lovely bay exposed to the rage of the salt waves two women, whose only crime was that they preferred the word of God to the ordinances of men, and the preaching of their pious clergy to the oaths and formulas of their courtly oppressors. The two Margarets, M'Lachlan and Wilson, were exposed on the beach of the Bay of Wigton, and drowned at the mouth of the Bladnoch Water, so the tradition says ; so the printed Church history of Scotland records ; so Macaulay narrates in his flashing pages. A stronger case of general popular tradition could not be conceived ; but recently certain writers, curious in yellowed parchments and learned in judicial registers, have come forward and pointed out a flaw in the written evidence ; certain documents absolutely necessary to the execution of criminals according to the forms of law do not appear ; therefore the criminals in this case were not, and could not have been executed : the tradition is consequently false.<sup>1</sup> I cannot believe that the tradition is false. It is more likely that in these irregular times legal documents should have been lost, or that, in disregard of all formal authority, these women, already condemned, should have had their sentence carried out, than that the whole

<sup>1</sup> This matter was first brought before the public in a very able statement by Mr. Irving of Dumbarton, entitled *The Drowned Women of Wigton* (1862). The documents in the Register House, Edinburgh, were exhibited to me by Dr. Robertson, Keeper of the Public Records.

local tradition about the matter, written and oral, should be a forgery. Admit, however, that these unfortunate victims were reprieved, what follows? Only that they were not actually drowned, not that there was no intention to drown them, not that they had not been condemned to be drowned, not that the act of drowning them, if carried out, was not in harmony with the whole character of the Government by whose minions they had been condemned. The local tradition only realized and incorporated in this particular case the general policy of the men, of whom this drowning was only an individual act; there was no lack of religious murders in those "killing times," to the long catalogue of which this drowning would only have been a worthy colophon. The tradition was true to the motive and time to which it belonged, more true a great deal than the reprieve would have been; so that, supposing even it were false, which I can in nowise allow, it conveyed by that lie a more true impression to future times, of Charles II., Laud and Lauderdale, in their Scottish policy, than a literal truth could have done. In this sense, then, I assert, that if there be any lies in the grand outline of the Homeric story of the siege of Troy, even these may convey to us some general truth more true than a special formal verity would have been. The soul and substance of all popular tradition is true, and the facts also, for the most part,—if not in all their limbs and flourishes, at least in their trunk and framework.

Let us now take some similar examples from the tradition of the ancient world, with which we have on the present occasion specially to do. The exodus of the Jewish people as a body from Egypt, one of the most notable events in ancient history, is well known to the modern reader from the detailed account in the Second Book of Moses. Of this

remarkable event, an account, according to the tradition of the Egyptians, has been preserved by Josephus. In the Second Book of his well-known *Apology against Apion*, the "Cymbalum mundi," as the Emperor Tiberius called him, we have the following narrative of the exodus from the books of Manetho, the learned priest of Sebenytus, the same to whom we owe the preservation of the famous Egyptian dynasties, to which the late advances in Egyptologic research have added such unexpected importance :--

"Amenophis, one of the old Egyptian kings, wishing to be privileged, as had been granted to one of his royal ancestors, to see the gods with his bodily eyes, brought his desire before the high priest, and received from him the answer, that in no other way could he hope to have his prayer granted than by ejecting from the country all the lepers and other polluted persons. Immediately the monarch, nothing loath, gathered together all the unclean persons in the country, to the number of eighty thousand, and sent them to the stone quarries in the mountain district to the east of the Nile, to work there apart from the rest of the Egyptians. The high priest at the same time enjoined on him to offer no violence on any account to this segregated people, unless he would draw down upon himself the anger of the gods ; adding, that it was fated that this unclean race should form a league with a foreign people, and conquer Egypt, and hold it in subjection for thirteen years. Thereafter the king granted to the ejected people the town Avaris, and the adjacent district for their peculiar abode ; and so soon as they were settled here, they elected as their head one Osarsiph, a priest of Heliopolis—for they had some learned priests in their body—and obeyed him in all things. Immediately Osarsiph made laws forbidding the worship of the Egyptian gods, and binding the people by a solemn oath to have no communion with those who reverenced sacred animals. He then ordered them to fence their city and prepare for war against King Amenophis, and at the same time sent an embassy of priests and other notable persons to a place called Jerusalem, where the shep-

herds lived who had been expelled by King Tethmosis, and persuaded them to join him in a warlike expedition against Egypt. The alliance speedily achieved its object ; for the Egyptian monarch having in his memory the warning of the high priest, feared to fight against the invaders, lest he should be found fighting against the gods. So, after providing for the safety of Apis and the other sacred animals, he retreated into Ethiopia, where he found an asylum with the friendly king of that country for the fateful thirteen years. Meanwhile, in Egypt, the Solymites, and the unclean race by whom they had been invited, occupied the country, and performed unheard-of barbarities. For they not only burned the towns and pillaged the templea, but showed such a disregard of all sacred usages and religious feelings that they even made their kitchens in the temples of the sacred animals, and caused the priests to slay and roast them and serve them up for food ; and after this they sent the priests out into the open country naked. It is said also that Osarsiph, under whose leadership all these violent and sacrilegious acts had been done, was originally a priest of Osiris in Heliopolis ; but that when he became an apostate and headed the lepers, he assumed the name of Moses.<sup>1</sup>

Now the point for us to consider, from our present point of view, in reference to this account of the exodus, is not whether Manetho took it from documents as early as the Books of Moses, and, it may be, contemporary with the event —for this is a matter which we have no means of ascertaining—but assuming that the account in the Books of Moses is the true one, and that the Egyptian account is of the nature of an unauthenticated tradition, we have here a most striking and instructive example of the manner in which, even under the most unfavourable circumstances, a great event in the history of a nation may remain identical in substance while it is distorted or altogether perverted in details. The important point is that a remarkable event of this kind, as it certainly

<sup>1</sup> Josephus, *Contra Apionem*, i. 26.

would not have been invented by the Egyptians had it not been a fact, so, being a fact, was too notorious to be ignored ; it was, therefore, after the common fashion of self-deceiving mortals, new fashioned, and represented in such a manner that whatever of disgrace it seemed to throw on the Egyptian race might appear to have arisen from a divine necessity, and whatever of piety or heroism belonged to the oppressed bondmen might be thrown into the shade by the ingratitude with which it was accompanied, and the barbarities in which it resulted. Interesting in connexion with this Egyptian version of the exodus is the general account which Strabo gives of the Jews.<sup>1</sup> He says that the general tradition (*φήμη*) about that people in Syria was that they were Egyptians. That this is not true, the analysis of the Coptic language alone, without the help of the Mosaic writings, is sufficient to prove. But it is true that the ancestors of the Jews sojourned for a long time in Egypt, so long that though foreign in blood, speech, and religion, they were obliged to act as Egyptians, and would readily pass for Egyptians with foreigners, just as Scotchmen and Irishmen of the present day on the Continent are often called Englishmen. It is true that they had not a few peculiar customs, such as circumcision, in common with the Egyptians, and it is also true that about eighteen hundred years, or, as some think, about fifteen hundred years, before Christ, they abandoned the country of their early sojourn, and established themselves as a great nation in the hill country of Southern Palestine. Thus we see the popular tradition, which in such cases a sceptical historian would throw overboard as altogether false, is in substantials true ; and if the poetic colouring which the old Trojan tale of the fall of Priam and the

<sup>1</sup> Strabo, xvi. 760.

rape of Helen received from the Hellenic genius of the Greek minstrels be paled down so as to suit the grey optics of modern criticism, we shall still have the grand fact of the Argive expedition, and the naval armament that sailed from Aulis, as entire and as trustworthy as any fact in what is called authentic history.

Every case of this kind, of course, must be looked at separately, and the false accretions rejected, and the real nucleus retained, according to the probabilities which a well-exercised judgment will readily discover in the special circumstances. To give another phase of what appears to me exaggerated and metamorphosed fact, we shall take the familiar Assyrian traditions respecting their great queen Semiramis. These traditions are known to us from the account of Ctesias, an accomplished Greek physician, who lived seventeen years at the Persian court about the time of the Peloponnesian war, and composed a history of Persian and Assyrian affairs from materials preserved in the royal archives. This work has been lost, but that part which related to the great Assyrian conqueress is given in detail by Diodorus.<sup>1</sup> Now, the account given by this historian, and those who follow him, of the character of this energetic Assyrian woman, her beauty, her prowess, her marches, her victories, and the architectural splendours of her metropolis, is such as we are familiar with in the accredited history of famous Oriental despots in all ages. Only, these probable and natural facts are decorated with certain legends plainly fabulous about her birth from the Ascalonian fish-goddess, Derceto; about her being exposed in the mountains and nourished by pigeons, and about her disappearance from earth in the shape of a pigeon when she was sixty-two years of age. Now, what I say is—and I am glad to see that a German historical writer of great sense

<sup>1</sup> II. 20.

and judgment agrees with me on this point<sup>1</sup>—that there is no superior wisdom whatever in presuming the falsehood of this tradition, and flinging it with the epithet of ‘mythical’ into the limbo of unsubstantial imaginations. It is true, indeed, that Ctesias is an author, who, in his book on India, told many strange and incredible stories about things beyond the Ganges and the Burrampooter, of which he knew little ; it is also true that a long list of Assyrian kings, between the son of Semiramis and Sardanapalus, is given by him, whose names, having no actions attached to them, and having no root in the tradition of the people, may be looked upon as fictitious ; though even this is by no means to be assumed gratuitously, as the sudden and sweeping dynastic changes which characterize government in the East naturally cause gaps in the continuity of the popular tradition, just as the strata on the earth’s surface are frequently found interrupted by some violent rent caused by subterranean convulsions. It is true further that the long chronology of thirty generations, from Ninus to Sardanapalus, which is given by Ctesias, but is unknown to Herodotus and Berosus, may contain some miscalculation.<sup>2</sup> Neither is it to be denied that the dove and the fish, which are so prominent in the fabulous embellishment of the life of Semiramis, were symbolical animals, significant of fecundity, and, as such, attached to the goddess Derceto, who seems to have been the original of the Greek Cytherean Venus ;<sup>3</sup> but in all this there is no reason why we should suppose the archives of the Persian kings to have been forged when they represented such a character as having existed, or why we should imagine that the popular

<sup>1</sup> Duncker, *Geschichte des Alterthums*, vol. i. p. 274. Berlin, 1855. <sup>2</sup> The authority of Ctesias is well defended by Bähr in his *Ctesiae Cnii Reliquie*. Francof. 1824. Pp. 35-40.

<sup>3</sup> Herod. i. 105. Creuzer, *Symb.* ii. p. 405.

memory had invented a great Assyrian queen to represent old Assyrian conquests, rather than found one. Nothing is more delusive than the fashion introduced by the Germans of discovering some curious points of analogy between a human person in national history and a national god, and straightway concluding that no such person ever existed, and that what tradition in such cases has given us is only a god in the guise of a man. Nothing was more common with Eastern monarchs than to do seriously what the Roman emperors of the West allowed to be done with a profane levity, namely, to assume the title of some god, and identify themselves in some aspects with the symbolism that belonged to his worship; or, if they did not go so far in their own persons while they were alive, nothing was more easy to the fervid imagination of their admiring subjects than to rush into some confusion of this kind after their death, and to create legends, in which the plain outlines of a wonderful human life were glorified by the addition of certain sacred symbols indicating a divine origin, a divine fellowship, and a divine consummation. This remark applies to the identification of the voluptuous Sardanapalus with the god Sandon, so ingeniously attempted by Ottfried Müller,<sup>1</sup> and indeed to a whole class of traditional names, received by previous centuries as the representatives of real persons, and now considered to be blown away by the sagacity of the modern school of criticism, into a motley convolution of myths and symbols. The ingenuity of those who revel in this extreme is admirable, but their wisdom is doubtful; and a sober historical estimate, such as belongs peculiarly to the cultivated intellect of this country, must bring us back to the point of view from which the great Roman historian started when he said, that while we willingly grant the privilege to antiquity

<sup>1</sup> *Kleine Schriften*, II. p. 101.

of mingling human things with divine, we can in nowise allow the systematic subtraction of that human element for the glorification of which this confusion took place.<sup>1</sup> Miraculous legends imply the co-existence of extraordinary persons; and if Romulus was believed to be carried up to heaven amidst thunder and lightning and dark clouds, it was not because Romulus was a myth, but because Rome was the marvel of the world, and its founder, of course, must be a marvellous man. There is a superhuman mythology that grew out of human history, just as certainly as there is a humanized theology that grew out of superhuman ideas. The real saint in such cases always precedes the nimbus, and the nimbus presupposes the saint.

These examples may be sufficient to show generally what is meant when I say that the element of tradition which is not religious, is, in its substance, generally historical fact, and only in its tone and decoration to a certain extent fictitious. My reasons for believing that popular tradition embodies facts and persons of great national significance, are also, from the tone of the above remarks, not at all doubtful. I believe that all great social changes take place through the instrumentality of great men;<sup>2</sup> that extraordinary revolutions are effected by extraordinary men; that the mass of the people are not only inclined to look on such characters with a transcendental admiration, but, feeling that their happiness or misery depends in a great measure on the

<sup>1</sup> Livy, *Histor. i.*, præfat.—“Datur hæc venia antiquitati ut, miscendo humana divinis, primordia urbium augustiora faciat.”

<sup>2</sup> “Wie alle Geschichte, so auch alle Ueberlieferung und Dichtung geht von grossen Persönlichkeiten aus.”—Bunsen, *Gott in der Geschichte*, 1857,

vol. i. p. 62.—An obvious enough principle, one should think, but not seldom left out of view in these days, when the extraordinary prominence given by some one-sided reasoners to external laws, seems in the fair way to explain human society without man, and a god-like world without God.

actions of such men, never fail to look on their lives with an absorbing interest, and to imprint their exploits on their memory in the sharpest lines ; and that so long as the nation exists in living activity, the names of the great national heroes, priests, prophets, legislators, warriors, will continue to exist with it, adorned, it may be, with many fanciful legends, containing rather what the cherished hero might have done than what he did, but remaining nevertheless a solid, central, and significant fact in the national existence.

We may now approach a degree nearer to our object—that is, an intelligent appreciation of the character of the materials of the Homeric Epic—if we take from various quarters of the world a series of popular ballads and popular epics, and prove by extensive and independent testimony that the historical character of their contents is indubitable. In the case of Homer this cannot be done, because we have no intrinsic prose authority of equal antiquity to adduce as a valid witness to authenticate his poetry. Let us therefore take a few cases in which we can place the contemporary historical record alongside of the tradition of the popular song, in a manner which incontrovertibly proves the original identity of their materials. And what serves our purpose best here is, by a happy chance, that well-known collection of ROMAIC BALLADS which forms the last link in the chain of printed Hellenic tradition, of which Homer forms the first. Almost the half of these in Passow's large collection are historical, that is, either containing short versified narrations of the adventures of the klepths, or brigands, in their rude, random warfare with their Turkish oppressors, or of the more honourable achievements of these same wild captains, when, in the year 1821, they joined the fellowship of more lawfully trained champions, and gloriously asserted the inde-

pendence of their country. Among the very first in historical significance are the short lines of national wail on the taking of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453:—

Πήραν τὴν πόλιν, πήραν τὴν! πήραν τὴν Σαλονίκην!  
 Πήραν καὶ τὴν ἀγιὰν Σοφιὰν, τὸ μέγα μοναστήρι,  
 Π' εἰχε τριακόσια σήμαντρα κ' ἔξήντα δυὸς καμπάναις.  
 Κάθε καμπάνα καὶ παππᾶς, κάθε παππᾶς καὶ διάκος.  
 Σιμὰ νὰ 'βγοῦν τὰ ἄγια, κ' ὁ βασιλεᾶς τοῦ κόσμου,  
 Φωνὴ τοὺς ἥρθ' ἐξ οὐρανοῦ, ἀγγέλων ἀπ' τὸ στόμα·  
 'Αφῆτ' αὐτὴν τὴν φαλμωδάν! νὰ χαμηλώσουν τ' ἄγια!  
 Καὶ στείλετε λόγον 's τὴν Φραγκιὰν, νὰ ἔρθουν, νὰ τὰ πιάσουν,  
 Νὰ πάρουν τὸν χρυσὸν σταυρὸν καὶ τ' ἄγιον εὐαγγέλιον,  
 Καὶ τὴν ἄγιαν τράπεζαν, νὰ μὴ τὴν ἀμολύνουν.  
 Σὰν τ' ἀκουστεν δέσποινα, δακρύζουν γέ εἰκόνες·  
 Σώπα, κυρία Δέσποινα! μὴ κλαίγης, μὴ δακρύζης!  
 Πάλε μὲ χρόνους, μὲ καιροὺς πάλε δικά σου εἶναι.

“ They have taken the city, they have taken it, they have taken  
 Thessalonica !  
 They have taken also St. Sophia, the large minster,  
 Which had three hundred altar bells, and sixty-two bells in the  
 steeple,  
 And to every bell a priest, and to every priest a deacon.  
 And when the Most Holy went out, and the Lord of the world,  
 A voice was wafted from heaven, from the mouth of angels,  
 ‘ Leave off your singing of psalms, set down the Most Holy,  
 And send word to the land of the Franks, that they may come  
 and take it ;  
 That they may take the golden cross, and the holy gospel,  
 And the holy table, that the infidels may not pollute it.’  
 When our Lady heard this her images wept,  
 ‘ Be appeased Lady, and do not weep,  
 For again, with the years and the seasons, again the minster will  
 be yours.’ ”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Popularia Carmina Graeciae Recens.* | *North British Review*, Nov. 1853, on  
*tioris*, Passow, Lips. 1860, p. 145; and | *Modern Greek Literature*, by J. S. B.

After the date of this ballad there occurs, as naturally might have been expected, a great blank of nearly four centuries in events of public social importance ; for what was there to record but one long-continued writhing under the hoof of the savage Moslem oppressor ? But immediately on the breaking up of the Turkish supremacy in Albania, by the unscrupulous and sanguinary ambition of Ali of Tepeleni, the songs of Greece broke out along with it, the "Suli lions" roared musically from their fastnesses, and the overture of a free Greece was played. Of this remarkable national restoration many of the most dramatic scenes and exploits are preserved in popular ballads ; and we see in the verses which sing the glories of Diacos, Marco Bozzari, Tzamades, Miaulis, and others, the same sort of materials which Homer possessed when he began to build up the scattered fragments of the famous old *Æolo* Ionic tradition into the lofty Epic of the Iliad. A similar faithful record of military campaigns in the form of popular song is found in the German war-songs of 1813, of which famous campaign, from the obstinate battle of Lützen in May to the three days' thunder that rolled over the blood-stained suburbs of Leipzig in October, a complete picture is presented in the patriotic song of Blücher's March, composed by Arndt,

*"Was blasen die Trompeten,"* etc.,

of which the stirring melody has now become familiar in our British streets. In the same manner, the salient points of the great mediæval struggles of the Serbians to maintain their nationality stand out distinctly in the national songs. "The history of the Serbian nation," says Ranke, "developed by its poetry, has through it been converted into a national property, and is thus preserved in the memory of the people.

The more ancient times have been almost forgotten, and recollection clings to the latest splendour of the nation, and to its downfall”<sup>1</sup> From this point of view the central figure in their earliest musical record is STEPHEN DUSHAN, who, in the middle of the fourteenth century, assumed the tiara on the banks of the Save, and held the globe and cross in his hand over many warlike tribes of Greek and Slavonic mountaineers, under the title of Emperor of Roumelia; and the most important historical event of which these ballads bear the sad, true record, is the great defeat of the united Servians, Bosnians, and Albanians, at the battle of Kosova, in 1389.<sup>2</sup> On these ballads, so historical in their roots, Ranke makes a remark, which strikingly shows in what manner the strong plant of popular minstrel tradition branches out into the marvellous. The great hero of the struggle which ended in the subjection of this brave people, was Marco Kraljewitch, who feared no man, but only the true God. He is described not as a man, like the other heroes, but as a supernatural being. He lives 160 years, and during the whole of that period rides the same horse, which drinks wine out of the same vessel which he himself uses; on it he sits with the charm of a dragon mounted on a dragon. No sword or club can kill him. Common sense understands how such exaggerated embellishments are consistent with the most solid nucleus of fact; but there is a certain school of Germans, not without imitators in this country, who, when they meet with marvellous descriptions of this kind in any hero of Greek or Roman tradition, deny his historical reality, register him with myths, degrade him

<sup>1</sup> Ranke’s *History of Serbia*, Eng. which translation the trochaic metre lish by Kerr. London, 1853; p. 52. of the original is preserved, with the  
<sup>2</sup> TALVI’s *Serbische Lieder*, 1853; in characteristic pauses.

into a symbol, or elevate him into a god. So much for foreign ballads. But Scotchmen need not travel abroad for illustrations of the important proposition that all tradition is founded on reality, and that all popular poetry and national Epic is only national history moulded into rhythmical shape by the passion and imagination of the people. Our own ballads, whether lamenting with the most plaintive grace great national catastrophes, or making the blood run to the galloping pace of a Border foray, or touching with the most graphic humour the incidents of domestic life, are the most real compositions in the world of books. And even in the remote, misty antiquity of our ancient Gaelic poetry, a region where some dogmatical critics asserted that only fictitious bards and heroes were floating, as bodiless and bloodless as the mists that trail their skirts round the grey granite cones of the West Highlands, even in that unclear element, the brawny forms of real men and women, fighting, and loving, and singing like ourselves, are now being distinctly recognised.<sup>1</sup> Who the Feinn were, and on what ground, Irish or Scotch, or both, their famous exploits were performed, may indeed be debated, because there is no authentic Iliad of these early times existing either in Erse or in Gaelic; but that they were men no one doubts; and if Celtic men, it would be strange indeed if, in the very earliest times, those bloody encounters between the Gaels and the Scandinavians of the north-western coast of Europe, should have failed, which flare out in such wild flashes athwart the dark pages of Scottish history in the Middle Ages. The subject-matter of Macpherson's epics is in the main as ancient and historical as its literary form is modern and factitious. And as for the venerable old Scald

<sup>1</sup> *The Dean of Lismore's Book: A Selection of Ancient Gaelic Poetry.* Edited by the Rev. Thos. M'Lauchlan and Dr. W. F. Skene. Edin. 1862.

to whom the rhymed records of those earliest pictures of the chase and the battle-field are ascribed, and who is represented as having lived to an age when, with an increasing sense of feebleness and sadness, he was forced to sing—

“ Long are the clouds this night above me,  
The last was a long, long night to me,  
This day, although I find it long,  
Longer was yesterday to me ;  
Each day that comes is long to me :  
Such was not my wont to be,”—

though he were an extremely credulous person who should set his seal to the title of the sixteenth century manuscript, in which this line occurs, “THE AUTHOR OF THIS IS OSSIAN,” not less, in my judgment, were he to be accounted unreasonably sceptical, who should believe that this and other such verses were sent forth to the world under the name of Ossian, if no such Celtic bard had ever existed. If there is a church of St. Paul’s in London, and in almost every town of Western Christendom, it is because there was a St. Paul, and because he was the great apostle of the European Gentiles ; if there is a church of Saint Columba on one of the great treeless isles of the Celtic Hebrides, it is because an adventurous saint of kingly blood actually did cross over from the north of Ireland to this coast in the sixth century, and founded a school of love, and gentleness, and truth in the midst of the wild lawless chieftains who ruled over these wild regions.

But let us now advance a step further, and examine the contents, not of single ballads and short narratives, which are the mere stones out of which the epic edifice grows ; but of those large homogeneous organisms in which ballad poetry has a tendency to culminate—the popular Epic. Here we have a very rich crop of literary productions, notable for

magnitude and significance, all belonging more or less to the same genus of epic poetry as the *Iliad*; all inspired by the same spirit, and composed, under various modifications, of similar materials. The *Mahá bhárata* and *Rámáyana* of the Hindoos, the *Shahnameh* of the Persians, the *Cid* of the Spaniards, the *Niebelungen* lay of the Germans, the *Carolingian* and *Arthurian* cycle of mediæval romance, branching out ultimately into the wild luxuriance of Ariosto's great work, are all instances of the little mustard-seed of a street-song, such as that quoted above on the fall of Constantinople, growing up into a mighty tree of beautifully decorated, strangely amplified, and sometimes wantonly metamorphosed history. Let us take first the lay of the *Niebelungen*. The general character of this Teutonic epic, its scenery and action, is distinctly historical.<sup>1</sup> There is a family of Burgundian kings, holding their court in purple pomp at Worms on the Rhine; there are embassies to distant Iceland, marriage affinities with Attila, king of the Huns; long and perilous journeyings down the Danube, and valorous exploits of Theodoric of Verona. But there is a manifest tone of exaggeration in the catastrophe, and there are elements in the character of one of the principal heroes, Siegfried, which have a mysterious and somewhat mythical look. Accordingly, we are not surprised to find, that after a great amount of erudite research and ingenious speculation on the subject, the Germans seem to be resting in the conclusion that the poem consists of two parts, the first, of which Iceland is the principal scene, and Siegfried the hero, perhaps originally a physical myth; the second, where Attila and Theodoric appear as chief figures, unques-

<sup>1</sup> Sketch of the Action of the *Niebelungen* Lay.—*Blackwood's Magazine*, January 1851. By J. S. B.

tionably historical.<sup>1</sup> But the great changes, both of religious belief and social form, to which Europe was exposed in the period during which the rudiments of this Epic were working themselves by various steps into their present shape, render the historical element in the Niebelungen much more vague and ineffective than from the certain historical reality of the principal persons and places might have been expected. A similar phenomenon is presented in the case of the great Persian Epic, the Shahnameh. Firdusi, the author of this immense poem, consisting of sixty thousand couplets, though holding a literary position which identifies him rather with a writing poet such as Walter Scott, than with a singing bard like Homer, has been by general consent, and deservedly, styled the Persian Homer; and in nothing is the resemblance between these two great Epic masters more striking than in the thoroughly historical character of the main action. No doubt, the Persian poet begins with the description of a golden age under Kaiumor, a sort of Oriental sultan, which is evidently mythical, and reminds one more of Hesiod than of Homer; but as he advances in his narrative the traces of true history loom out more distinctly, and though no contemporary history exists to test the reality of the names of the principal kings in the early part of the poem, Oriental scholars have never doubted the general historical basis of the poem, as indeed the poet himself deliberately disclaims all invention, professing only to select and arrange the traditional materials of which he was possessed. Of course, in an Oriental poet, even so modestly Oriental as Firdusi is when compared with the poets of the

<sup>1</sup> *Geschichte des Niebelungen Lieds.* quoted above, p. 9; Mone, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Deutschen Jahrschrift*. April 1843. Consult also W. Grimm's *Deutsche Heldensage*, 1836; and Grässle, *Sagenkreise des Mittelalters*, 1842.

Hindoo Epics, monstrous exaggerations and light-hearted disregard of probability present themselves. Men live several hundred years, and kings reign a thousand. Rustem, the Persian Hercules, easily tears up trees, and flings mountains about in a way which finds its Hellenic counterpart not in Homer's battles of mortal men, but in Hesiod's heaven-storming of the Titans. But as the labours of Rustem are only seven, while those of Hercules are twelve, no attempt that I know of has yet been made by physical mythologists in Germany to turn the human hero into a sun-god, and the bright course of his human life into a celestial zodiac. In the latter part of his poem, that is, during the dynasty of the Sassanides, which was put an end to by the Caliphate, Firdusi becomes altogether historical,—does not indeed, in his general tone, ascend above the level of a pleasantly rhymed chronicle. Here he falls immeasurably below Homer, who, while working with historical materials, always handles them as a poet, and will have nothing to do with facts, except in so far as they are beautiful or sublime, and nicely fitting together as parts of a harmonious and impressive whole. The old Maenian minstrel had the painter's eye to know that not the history of a series of wars, but the personal adventures that arise out of war, supply the true materials for art. He wisely, whilst standing on the firm basis of traditional reality, chose an episode of the Trojan war for the subject of his great poem, not that war itself; while Firdusi, by his patriotic but unwise ambition to give historical completeness to the general scheme of his great work, could produce genuine poetical effect only in the subordinate parts.<sup>1</sup> The great Hindoo

<sup>1</sup> My knowledge of the *Shahnameh* is derived from what appears to be the excellent German translation of its principal sections by Schack; Berlin, 1851, with the preliminary Dissertation; and also from the *Shahnameh in Prose and Verse*, by Atkinson; Lond. 1832.

Epic, which admits most fitly of a comparison with Homer, is the Rámáyana. "The Muses of Herodotus," says Professor Max Müller, "are the Rámáyana of Hellas."<sup>1</sup> If this be not merely a rhetorical phrase, which is not probable in a writer of such character, it must mean either that there is no fact in Herodotus, or that the Rámáyana is not all fiction. The former he cannot mean; the other alternative therefore stands. And in complete harmony with this, we find the testimony of Professor Williams regarding the contents of that remarkable poem as follows:—

"The Rámáyana rests in all probability on a foundation of historical truth. It is certainly likely that at some remote period, probably not long after the settlement of the Aryan races in the plains of the Ganges, a body of invaders, headed by a bold leader, and aided by the barbarous hill tribes, may have attempted to force their way into the peninsula of India as far as Ceylon. The heroic exploits of the chief would naturally become the theme of songs and ballads, the hero himself would be deified, the wild mountaineers and foresters of the Vindhya and neighbouring hills who assisted him would be poetically converted into monkeys, and the powerful but savage aborigines of the south into many-headed ogres and blood-lapping demons called 'rakshasas.' These songs would at first be the property of the kshatriya, or fighting caste, whose deeds they celebrated; but the ambitious Brahmans, who aimed at religious and intellectual supremacy, would soon see the policy of collecting the rude ballads which they could not suppress, and moulding them to their own purposes. This task was committed to a poet writing under their influence. Those ballads which described too plainly the independence of the military caste, and their successful opposition to the sacerdotal, were modified, obscured by allegory, or rendered improbable by monstrous mythological embellishments. Any circumstances which appeared to militate against the Brahmanical system were speciously explained away, glossed over, or mystified."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Müller's *Sanskrit Literature*, 1859, p. 17. <sup>2</sup> *Indian Epic Poetry*. By Professor Williams. London, 1863, p. 9.

Returning from the hyperbolical East to the struggles between Moors and Christians in Spain, we find in the *Cid* a great national tradition, of the historical character of which no one ever entertained any doubt, and a historical tradition, existing in the triple form of prose chronicle, popular Epic, and simple ballad, which, when it has free scope to develop itself, the cherished poetry of the people delights to assume.<sup>1</sup> The struggle between Moors and Christians in Spain, from the first introduction of the former by the Visigoths in the early part of the eighth century, to the great victory of the united Spaniards in 1212, involving, as it did, not only civil but religious consequences of the utmost magnitude, formed the grand centre of popular interest throughout the whole of Europe during the Middle Ages; was in fact an event of precisely similar significance in Christendom to the war of Troy in ancient Greece; for as the battle of Tours in 732, and the victories of Charlemagne on the Spanish march, signified the liberation of France, central Europe, and ultimately of Spain, from the brilliant but ferocious despotism of the Caliphs, so the war of Troy, as the first great act of collision between Europe and Asia, afterwards repeated at Marathon, and on the Granicus, signified that, in the counsels of Providence, the sober, regulated freedom of the West was to triumph over the magnificent servitude of the East. In this great idea of deliverance from Oriental despotism, the historical ballads of the *Cid* and the cycle of Carlovingian romance find their common centre; and we are not therefore to be surprised if the Saxon exploits of the great Franco-Germanic emperor do not present the same

<sup>1</sup> The *Chronicle of the Cid*. By Robert Southey; with Extracts from the Poem in Verse. Of about 4000 lines. Spanish Ballads. By J. G. Lockhart. *The Cid*, in German, by Herder.

front in the romance that they do in the history; for though the romance, no less than the history, is founded on fact, the relative importance of the objects which they exhibit is determined in the one by passion and imagination, in the other by the understanding; and thus Charlemagne, as the conqueror of the comparatively harmless Saxon, has become in popular tradition a secondary and uninteresting figure, compared with the same emperor as the champion of Christendom against the Saracens. So sometimes, in contemplating a large and complex edifice, the intelligent spectator will turn away from the main front, and fix his eye on some quaint ivy-grown turret in a corner, where a great popular prophet was harboured from persecution, or a great popular warrior nursed for the hour of national regeneration. The instinct of the ballad-singer in such cases is more true than the judgment of the historian; the one fixes on what has a deeper moral interest, the other on what has a greater material expansion. But the popular traditions with regard to Charlemagne, besides this particular change of the point in view, were at an early period removed by supervening events, and partly, no doubt, by the general genius of mediæval poetry, into that region of the miraculous and incredible which separates them by a sharp demarcation from the sobriety and verisimilitude of the Iliad. Nay more; instead of the solid matter-of-fact foundation which Homer always carries along with him, and instead of the serious tone which, as the bearer of accredited national tradition, the poet of the Iliad never forgets, we have in the ultimate form of the Carlovingian traditions that wanton play of fancy, and that intentional defiance of all probability, which makes Ariosto useful to the student of Homer only as presenting the greatest possible contrast. Even he, how-

ever, knew the value of painting his humorous arabesques on the strong wall of a historic reality; and although he might not be curious to establish his Siege of Paris by the Saracens on the testimony of authentic witnesses, still there were Saracens, and there was a Carlo Magno, whose majestic figure and ample white beard at once commanded a sort of belief in his strange story, and increased its comical effect. The learned investigations of his commentators have also brought to light the probable historical original of his wonder worker, Rinaldo.<sup>1</sup> There remains now, to conclude this rapid view of popular traditions that have assumed the form of national Epic, the famous Arthurian cycle of romance, on which the reproach of being altogether mythical and a tissue of lies has been most broadly cast. I am by no means concerned to vindicate the historical trustworthiness of Geoffrey of Monmouth, by whom the Arthurian history was first vented, nor to go back with curious microscopic vision to the age when "this island was called Albion, and was inhabited by none but a few giants;"<sup>2</sup> but what appears plain is, that not only in Geoffrey, but in the large mass of Welsh and Armorican tradition generally, there is a King Arthur who fights against the Saxons, and maintains the independence of the Britons with great success, for a season, in the mountain fastnesses of western England; that this tradition carries no improbability on its face, but is, on the contrary, just what we should expect to find taking place in the circumstances; and that the silence of mere Anglo-Saxon or Latinized writers is of no more account

<sup>1</sup> Panizzi, *Introduction to the Orlando Furioso*. On the Carlovingian romance generally, see an excellent paper by King, in *Oxford Essays*, No. I., 1856.

<sup>2</sup> *The British History of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, from the Latin, by Thompson; a new edition. Giles, London, 1842; p. 22.

in such a matter than the silence of a modern Russian chronicle would be about the battle of Inkermann. The extraordinary want of any firm topographical and historical basis in the common romance of King Arthur is easily explained by the manner in which the original tradition was knocked about from Wales to France, and from France to England, through the intervention of the Normans. To snap the continuity of a national tradition by such an event as our Norman invasion, and to receive it, not at first hand from the original framers, but indirectly through all sorts of modifying and transmuting forces, is to open the door to every wild improbability, and to change the character of the material from that of a strongly rooted tree to that of a loosely floating balloon. It must also be remembered that the traditions of a people, who, while offering a stout resistance to their invaders, are ultimately subjugated, always distort the truth more than those which celebrate victory. For there lies in the very nature of the popular, shall we not say rather of the human mind, a necessity to disguise from itself the full extent of any great national calamity, and to withdraw from view the disagreeable spectacle of final defeat, by dwelling on the partial but ineffectual successes which preceded it. A self-complacent imaginative legerdemain of this kind has been traced by Ranke in the contents of the Serbian ballads, and something similar may certainly be supposed to lie at the bottom of the great victories of King Arthur, as set forth in the chronicle of Geoffrey. Nevertheless, as in the case of Ariosto, though here necessity, and there whim, may have strangely transformed the accidents, the central fact remains. It is unreasonable to suppose that a character so firmly rooted in Cymric and Armoric tradition as Arthur, should have been a mere figment. Brutus

and his new Troy on the river Thames belong altogether to a different category. Arthur, therefore, according to the whole analogy of popular tradition, was a real character. He is as certain as Charlemagne; and had he only belonged to the conquering party, he would have been as undisputed as Alexander the Great.<sup>1</sup>

All the instances which have been hitherto enumerated are comprehended under the general head of popular ballads and popular Epic. For although in some of these cases the rhythmical form has ultimately resolved itself into that of prose narrative, as in the case of the Cid and the common English romance of the Mort d'Arthur, nevertheless the poetic character of the prose is sufficiently evident. The entertainment of the imagination is the direct object of the writer, and the gravity of history is never affected. It sometimes happens, however, that popular tradition is presented to us in this dignified garb; and nothing in such a case is more natural than that the mass of men who are governed by appearance should accept the narrative as either altogether true, or at least more faithful than similar traditions are assumed to be, when exhibited in the form of an epic poem. But the fact is not so. The first book of Livy, to take a familiar and well-sifted example, does not contain a grain of more truth than the Iliad; in all probability it contains less. A thorough examination into the history of literature and early record among the Romans has dispelled the idea that the contents of this book could possibly have been founded on what a modern historian would call authentic documents. It is therefore either a forgery, like

<sup>1</sup> On King Arthur, besides the common book of Sir Thor. Malory, new edition, by Wright, 1858, see the *Mabinogion*, by Lady Charlotte Guest, and Grässle, *Sagenkreise des Mittelalters*, p. 95.

Geoffrey of Monmouth's history of the British Kings from Brutus to Cassivelaunus, or it is the product of popular tradition, or it may be a mixture of both. That it is partly constructed there are obvious signs, which no student of early history will require to have pointed out to him. On the exact chronology of such early periods no dependence can be placed ; the account of the Trojan colony of Æneas, and the Greek settlement of Evander, may perhaps wisely be referred to the ever busy faculty of "lying Greece," which peopled the whole shore of the Mediterranean with fictions, grateful alike to the vanity of those by whom and for whom they were invented ; while the empty catalogue of the kings of Alba Longa—names, and nothing more—which fills a few sentences in the third chapter, may safely be dismissed to the same unsubstantial limbo of half-conscious, half-unconscious forgeries, where Pelasgus and Palæchthon Italus, and Græcus and Ægialeus have long been floating. Still the main body of the history of Rome under the early kings is true. The kings of Alba Longa may be as bodiless as ghosts, but Alba Longa itself is a fact as stable as the Alban rock on which it stood. As to the seven Roman kings whose history makes up the bulk of the first book of Livy, the historical reality of five of them is admitted by one of the most learned and judicious writers of the sceptical school of Germany.<sup>1</sup> No one ever denied that the Romans were originally governed by kings. And yet this is a fact which, inasmuch as it is not received on the evidence of any authentic document or positive certificate (as Grote requires),<sup>2</sup> is accepted on the authority

<sup>1</sup> Schwegler's *Römische Geschichte*. Tübingen, 1853. He holds that "with the death of Numa the purely mythical history of Rome ends" (p. 558), and "with Tullius the dawn of real history appears" (p. 579).

<sup>2</sup> *History of Greece*, vol. i. p. 353. Ed. 1862.

of mere tradition. And justly so. For not only is this tradition conformable to the whole tenor of ancient history, but there were usages and institutions, not to mention ideas and habits of popular feeling amongst the Romans, which must have either grown out of the fact of a kingship, or sprung into general belief out of nothing,—an extreme phase of negative criticism, which, supposing an effect without any adequate cause, like Atheism, disproves itself by its want of all reason. The popular hatred of the word ‘king’ in ancient Rome, is as certain a guarantee of the fact of a monarchy as the popular hatred of the word ‘Popery’ in Scotland, is of the ecclesiastical murders committed by Cardinal Beaton and the minions of King Charles the Second. And if the Roman people had reason to maintain through long centuries a vivid apprehension of the fact that they had originally lived under kingly government, who that knows anything of the popular memory will imagine that either the names of the most prominent of those kings should have been obliterated, or their characters forgotten? There are only seven names in all, and there is not a schoolboy, perhaps, who could not tell on his fingers the names of the kings of England from Henry VIII. downwards, with their general character and principal exploits. Nor let it be supposed that this retentiveness of the popular memory, with regard to the character of their sovereigns, is the result of mere school-training and bookish indoctrination. In this reading age, too much is apt to be ascribed to the influence of printed paper. The memory, as Plato with profound insight remarks, is more likely to lose than to gain power by the habit of referring everything to writing;<sup>1</sup> and it was some-

<sup>1</sup> οὐκον μνήμης ἀλλ' ἵπομνήσεως φάρμακον εῖρε τὰ γράμματα.

*Phaedrus*, 275, B.

thing far more impressive than the rhyme of the school-mistress or the rod of the schoolmaster that imprinted on the tables of the popular memory in this country the broad joviality of Henry VIII., the prudent policy of prosperous Queen Bess, the wanton freaks of the Merry Monarch, the stolid bigotry of James II., and the constitutional glories of King William. In the same way, and by the help of a thousand local and family points of attachment, we may rest assured that the Roman people knew the names of their seven kings, their characters, their residences, their family histories, and their exploits. Respecting the last five, it was already noticed that this is admitted by Schwegler; and the sceptical attitude assumed both by him and Professor Newman, with respect to Romulus and Numa, seems to me to be anything but warranted. "The names of Romulus and Remus," says Mr. Newman,<sup>1</sup> "are evidently made from Rome itself, nor is there a single fact concerning either of these personages which has the slightest pretence to be called historical. Romulus is to ancient Rome what the name of Pharaoh is to ancient Egypt,—a gathering into one name of the kings or captains who through the whole period exercised government there." Without denying that such may be the procedure sometimes of the popular imagination, but more probably of some impertinent forger of fictitious annals, I cannot see in this sceptical theory, applied to the present case, the slightest superiority to the positive belief of the ancient Romans that Romulus was an individual man and a great sovereign. It is not at all likely that the Romans, whose memory was only burdened with seven kings, should have forgotten the most famous of them, viz., the first. That

<sup>1</sup> *Regal Rome*. London, 1852; p. 31. | genious, and loveable, and learned man. One of the best books of a most in- | Compare Schwegler, p. 419.

his name should be a mere variation of the town which he ruled may excite a suspicion, but can of itself never amount to an argument ; for if the Greeks had a familiar trick of inventing imaginary heads of tribes, named after the land which the tribe possessed, it is quite as certain, on the other hand, that Alexandria in Egypt was called after Alexander the Great, and Alexandria on Loch Lomond after Alexander Smollett the historian. As to the accumulation of all the principal institutions of Roman soldiership and Roman polity round the name of the founder of the city, this took place just because there actually was a great warrior and a great king ; in the same way that all the Spartan institutions were attributed to Lycurgus. We know as little of Lycurgus as of Romulus, and yet even Mr. Grote does not deny the existence of the great Spartan lawgiver.<sup>1</sup> As to his wonderful birth and miraculous assumption into heaven, these imaginative embellishments, as before stated, are not the proofs that the subject of them was a myth, but the consequences of his having been an extraordinary reality. That the popular Roman tradition had little more to tell about him than his name and his character, one can readily believe. This the distance of time renders sufficiently probable. The detail that fills up the picture may have been artfully constructed ; but the central figure, according to the whole analogy of popular tradition, is entitled to remain ; and in allowing Romulus to stand as a person without guaranteeing all his alleged exploits, Livy may be considered to have acted on more sound principles of historical criticism than Niebuhr or Schwegler or Newman.<sup>2</sup> To the same conclu-

<sup>1</sup> He only denies the agrarian laws as a part of his policy ; against which sceptical view see my paper in the *Transactions of the Royal Society, Edinburgh*, 1863-64.

<sup>2</sup> The Patavinian was as sharp-

sion one is led on a consideration of the whole circumstances of the case regarding Numa, whom Schwegler thinks as imaginary as the nymph Egeria, with whom the popular legend reports him to have had communings. It appears rather that this legend would never have been invented had there not existed a real Numa, to whom it referred, as the legends about the Roman Catholic and Greek saints, however extravagant and incredible, always imply the recognised existence of the holy persons about whom they are made. "To Numa," says Newman, expressing the favourite idea of the Germans, "are ascribed the fundamental religious institutions of the Romans, and his whole history is invented out of this one thought;" "therefore," continues the same writer, "his reign is all but mythical;"<sup>1</sup> therefore, argues Schwegler (and because Numa comes from *νέμω*, to distribute),<sup>2</sup> Numa did not exist. Is this logic?<sup>3</sup>

The intelligent reader will now perceive that the whole question about the trustworthiness of national traditions, whether in the grave form of sober narrative, addressed to

sighted as any learned German in respect to the character of the materials of his first five books. This is plain from the well-known introductory words to lib. vi.: "Quæ ab condita urbe Roma ad captam eamdem urbem Romani sub regibus primum, consulibus deinde ac dictatoribus, decemviris-que ac tribunis consularibus gessere, foris bella, domi seditiones, quinque libris exposui; res quum vetustato nimia obscuras, velut quæ magno ex intervallo loci vix cernuntur, tum quod parvæ et raro per eadem tempora literæ fuere, una custodia fidelis memorie rerum gestarum, et quod, etiam si, quæ in commentariis pontificum aliquis publicis privatisque erant mo-

nimentis, incensa Urbe plerique interire."

<sup>1</sup> *Regal Rome*, p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> "No mode of reasoning is in general weaker or more delusive than etymological conjecture."—(Clinton, vol. i. p. 5.) As practised by a certain school of Germans, and some Celtic dreamers in this country, it is a mere juggle.

<sup>3</sup> On the early history of Rome, besides the works quoted, the student will of course read the *Inquiry into the Credibility of Early Roman History*, by the late Sir G. C. Lewis, a work distinguished by all that comprehensiveness of plan, massive architecture, and substantial workmanship, so characteristic of its author.

the understanding, like Livy's Roman History, or in the glowing verses of a national Epic, like Homer's Iliad, is, like all other questions of disputed evidence, fundamentally a question of presumption. With what presumption are we to start? On whom does the burden of proof lie? These two questions, which are virtually one, are the hinge on which turn all the important critical questions which have agitated the thinking world since Niebuhr and Wolf. The presumption from which I wish the student of Homer to start, is that the central fact, the grand outline, and the dominant tendency of popular tradition, unless under the exceptive action of disturbing causes, are true. The reader must judge from his own observation of the character of human testimony, and from the process of accumulated induction through which I have endeavoured to lead him, how far such a presumption is natural, healthy, and wise. But neither must he allow himself to be carried off by any one-sided sweeping proposition in favour of uncertified tradition. What is best to do is to hit the Aristotelian mean between credulity and scepticism in matters of this kind, and willingly to admit that there are presumptions of an opposite character which must be allowed in a particular class of cases, and which must force us to proceed with caution in pronouncing a judgment on the validity of any given matter certified by mere tradition. I am willing, therefore, to state quite fairly the point of view from which the symbolizing writers of the German school start, and to admit the truth of the presumption against historical reality in tradition on which they proceed, so long as that presumption is confined to the special class of cases to which it belongs, and is not allowed to run with a tyrannous sweep over the whole field of human tradition. Let us admit, therefore, broadly, in the first place, that there is such a

thing as historical forgery, nay, that fictitious history is a thing to which the human mind is so prone, that there does not exist a single instance of accredited national record that is not to some extent adulterated with this element. The first origin of all nations is obscure, and the dearth of real facts always belonging to this epoch has been, in all countries, more or less plentifully supplied by a certain strange combination of curiosity and vanity, which, acting on a vivid imagination, makes people indifferent to truth. Under the influence of feelings of this kind, certain Jews, in ancient times, sat down with the utmost gravity, and wrote a detailed life of Adam, with as much minuteness as if they had been the personal friends of the first man, and, as literary executors, had been furnished with authentic materials for the composition of his biography.<sup>1</sup> The lexicographer Suidas, in his account of the Egyptian seer Heraiscus, tells us of a certain Asclepiades, who composed an Egyptian history extending over a period of thirty thousand years! These are examples of literary forgery which require no comment. But they have manifestly nothing to do with the popular tradition, which is the basis of national ballads and early history; for this rarely deals in fictitious personalities, is never pedantic, and seldom altogether absurd. In judging of the amount of human reality to be presumed in any popular tradition, we can never be safe against the most delusive results, unless we keep in view the special habit of the popular mind, with which, in each particular case, we have to deal. And in this view, it is certain that the traditions of all peoples professing polytheism are to be sifted with much greater care than those of monotheists. A polytheistic faith like that of ancient Greece, necessarily peoples

<sup>1</sup> See Syncellus. Edit. Goar, 1652, p. 5.

the atmosphere of common belief with a host of thoroughly human-looking figures, of which it may sometimes be difficult to decide whether they are gods or men. In a certain class of cases, it is sufficiently transparent that the thing which walks about with all the titles and appurtenances of a human being is only the impersonation of a place. When Sidon is called the first-born of Canaan,<sup>1</sup> it requires little imagination and little historical knowledge to understand that by this expression the historian meant to say that Sidon was the earliest settlement of the Canaanitish race on the Phœnician coast. In the same way, when Pausanias (III. 1) tells us that Sparta was a fair maiden, daughter of the Eurotas, and Platea another, daughter of the Asopus (IX. 1), we only require to imagine ourselves polytheists for a moment, and we shall with equal ease say that Pertha is a fair virgin daughter of the serene old Taius, and that Strevelinga is a tall princess crowned with towers, whose father is a warty-nosed old Titan called Grampus, and her mother a tortuous, slow gentlewoman, named Fortha. We must also keep our eyes open to the fact, that among polytheistic peoples, not only many places assume the appearance and perform the functions of persons, but the mere attributes of the gods may receive a distinct personality, either as gods, or as human attendants on the gods.<sup>2</sup> Nay, more; we may grant that there is an undeniable tendency at certain seasons of the religious life of polytheistic peoples, to degrade the denizens of Olympus from their original lofty position, so that they are found walking about on earth, with earthly attributes and in earthly companionship, so as not to be distinguished from

<sup>1</sup> Genesis x. 15

<sup>1</sup> 1825, p. 73) says on Callisto, and com-

<sup>2</sup> See what Müller (*Prolegomena zu einer wissenschaftlichen Mythologie*, II. 508, on Aristaeus.

pare Justin. XIII. 7, and Apoll. Rhod.

mortal men. If, for instance, Ætolia had ever been invaded by a race of polytheists, who worshipped the sun, the moon, and the heavenly bodies, but had no idea of the worship of anything terrestrial, and these invaders had heard from the original inhabitants certain legends about a great struggle between Heracles and Achelous, they might naturally conclude that because Heracles was confessedly a man and a Theban hero, Achelous was an Ætolian hero of the same quality. Thus the water-god, in the eyes of the unenlightened star-worshipper, would become a mortal man. It may also happen, even without such supposed foreign intrusion, that in the course of religious changes, elemental personifications, perfectly significant to the generation which made them, may to a future, and in some respects improved generation, become unintelligible ; and then the impersonation which spoke in burning characters to the devout imagination, becomes a mute person in the cold record of the understanding. Prometheus and Epimetheus, Herse, Aglauros and Pandrosus, Endymion, Daphne, and many others, are familiar examples of such transformations.<sup>1</sup> When we find Proteus, a sea-god in Homer, become on the coast of Egypt an Egyptian king, and Adonis, a god in his native Phœnicia, to the Greek imagination only a beautiful youth,<sup>2</sup> we shall cease to wonder at the learned processes by which Uschold, Forchhammer, and a whole school of German writers, have driven all reality out of Hellenic tradition, and disowned wholesale every human element in mythological tradition.<sup>3</sup> But these writers have erred in the very obvious way of taking the exception for the rule, and applying to the

<sup>1</sup> See Max Müller on *Comparative Mythology*. Oxford Essays, 1856.

<sup>2</sup> Bunsen's *Egypt*, i. 160. Dunc-

<sup>3</sup> *Vorhalle zur Griechischen Geschichte und Mythologie*, Uschold,

1838. *Hellenika*, by Forchhammer. Basle, 1837.

interpretation of all traditional figures a special presumption applicable only to a few. After all allowance is made for the arbitrary play of fancy in a mercurial people or among migratory races, there remains the undoubted fact that the most interesting thing to man has ever been man ; and that though the exact line of demarcation between the human and the divine in ancient tradition may not always be traceable —for where does nature allow the human finger to lay itself sensibly on her fine lines of subtle transition ?—yet a human element must ever be there, and human figures always the most prominent. Certainly, in the Iliad it is as unreasonable to suppose Achilles a water-god,<sup>1</sup> as to make Jupiter, according to the shallow fancy of the old Euhemerists, a mere human king of Crete. We must take these groups—the human and the divine—in broad distinct masses, as Homer has given them, not letting our imagination run riot in arbitrary conjectures, nor frittering away our intellects on puerile etymologies.

<sup>1</sup> This is a favourite fancy with the Germans, from the infection of which not even Welcker is free. It is easy to connect Ἀχιλεὺς with *Aqua*, and Peleus with *πηλός*, the *slime* of the Spercheius ; and, with the addition of Thetis the sea-nymph, the whole matter is plain ! Many a big German book is piled on no broader basis.

## DISSERTATION II.

### ON THE FUNDAMENTAL FACT OF THE ILIAD : THE TROJAN WAR.

THE presumption in favour of the historical reality of early popular tradition being thus established, there will now be little difficulty in applying the general principle to the special facts of early Hellenic history set forth in the Iliad ; provided always we use the Aristotelian canon, of applying to every question no more subtle sort of reasoning than its nature demands,<sup>1</sup> and do not insist, as some people fondly will, on cutting logs with razors, and examining mountains with microscopes. We shall therefore attempt, in the first place, to mount up by an independent prose route to the poetical tableland of Homer, and see whether there are distinct traces of human footsteps up to that elevation, or if we are wandering, as on some broad moor of the West Highlands, through seas of blinding mist and leagues of feet-confounding bog. Our safest starting-point will be from Thucydides, the first critical historian of Greece, who lived in an age of intense literary and philosophical activity, and who examined the early traditions of his country with the affectionate sympathy which belongs to the warmth of patriotism tempered by the cool judgment of exact science. Now, he tells us that from the time when he wrote,—that is, towards

<sup>1</sup> Aristot. *Ethic. Nicom.* 1. 3.

scientific men of the Alexandrian school, but who certainly was not possessed of materials which could enable him, otherwise than in the way of approximation, to lay down a minute chronology of those early times. But though popular tradition takes no account of strict scientific chronology, it by no means follows that distances of time in those early periods are altogether untrustworthy. It is with measures of time as with measures of space: they may often be generally true, or true within certain limits, without being scientifically exact. A peasant may tell you that certain mountains are about thirty miles to the west of where you are now standing; there are no milestones; no mathematical triangle ever squared the country; and yet, within three or four miles, if he be an intelligent peasant, or within ten miles, if he be of the duller sort, you will find your informer is correct. So with history. Though the best-informed men we can find differ as to the exact date of a fact which happened six or seven hundred years ago, you need not therefore apprehend that you know nothing at all about the date; much less are you under any logical compulsion to believe that not only is the date altogether uncertain, but the event a pure figment. The date of the event is by no means altogether uncertain. It certainly did not take place yesterday; it did not take place four hundred years ago; and you may confidently say that it did not take place so long ago as a thousand years; because, had it stretched so far back, there would, as in the case of land distances, have been a misty and mythological air about it, which, in such instances as we are now concerned with, is not the case. Independently of the testimony of Homer, no man, looking at the figure of Agamemnon, as we now have it in the connected chain of Hellenic tradition, and at the figure of Cadmus, could conclude that these two

personages were contemporary. There is a more and a less ancient look about traditional figures, which to an eye of common discrimination at once decides their relative eras without the assistance of an exact chronology. I conclude therefore that we have found Agamemnon and the Trojan expedition by a trustworthy route of direct historical ascent, altogether independent of the Iliad.

But the truth or falsehood of any story, old or new, depends not only on the external units of testimony by which we trace it to its original source, but on its own internal consistency and verisimilitude. No sane man would believe such a story as is told in Ariosto's 'Orlando,' or in Lucian's 'Vera Historia,' however well attested. Is there anything, therefore, in the character and attitude of the famous tale of Troy, that should render its reality a matter of suspicion to a man of sense and sound judgment? In the general outline of the story, at least, I confess I see nothing. That neighbours are given to quarrel, and that a common boundary is oftener a bone of contention than a bond of peace, is a political principle which history teaches by a thousand examples. That the coasts of Europe and Asia, separated by the small breadth of the *Ægean* Sea, and that breadth bridged over by scores of islands placed at easy intervals, were peopled by races which naturally came into hostile collision, the names of Marathon, Eurymedon, and the Granicus loudly declare. And if Agamemnon, from the eastern coast of Greece, sailed with a vast armament against a famous empire of Asia, some eleven hundred years before Christ, he only performed the natural overture to the great drama enacted afterwards on the same stage, successively by the Macedonians, the Romans, and the Crusaders. Of the existence of a powerful sovereign, such as the Iliad repre-

sents Agamemnon to have been, in the ages preceding the Dorian invasion of the Peloponnesus, we can have no doubt ; for his reality is attested not only by the close-linked testimony which we have just adduced, but by the massive architectural remains of the palace and suburbs of Mycenæ, which were admired as the work of Cylopean hands by the Greeks themselves, and which now look down from the grey hills on the glorious Bay of Argolis, with that fixed regard of remote antiquity with which the Memphian Pyramids contemplate the changes of shifting despotisms on the Nile.<sup>1</sup> As to the particular cause of the hostile collision celebrated in the Iliad, there is no need to be curious ; what we find in history assigned as the cause of a war is often only its occasion ; but if we are to take literally the rape of the fair Lacedæmonian princess as the cause of the hostile invasion of the Achæans, which issued in the fall of the kingdom of Priam, there will be no need to search the records of history curiously for parallels to a great fire having arisen out of so small a spark, and we shall have no just cause to express our surprise—

τούγδ' ἀμφὶ γυναικὶ πολὺν χρόνον ἀλγεα πάσχειν—

“ That for a fair one, of all fair the chief,  
So many men so long should suffer grief.”

But whether the treacherous abduction of the fair Helen was the real cause of the Trojan war or not, is a matter of the smallest moment. That there were such abductions in those times, and in those parts of the world, is only too certain.<sup>2</sup> But what we should insist on, as sound interpreters of tradition, is

<sup>1</sup> Pausanias II. 16 ; and Mure, *Journal of a Tour in Greece*, 1842. Vol. ii. p. 161.

<sup>2</sup> See particularly what Herodotus says in the well-known Introduction to his History, I. 2.

that the collision itself, between two great powers of Europe and Asia, on opposite coasts of the *Æ*gean, is to be accepted as a fact, and such a fact as, even without any special testimony, was to be looked for in the circumstances. Further, if we inquire whether the Homeric method of representing this fact has a fabulous look about it, like so many stories in our Arthurian romances, or whether it is not rather in the most perfect consistency with all the known local and historical relations of the times, we shall meet with no less complete satisfaction. The accuracy of the geographical and topographical allusions in the Iliad, which are in so far a direct guarantee to the general verity of the whole poem, is universally acknowledged, and will be specially proved, in our commentary. The mention of contemporary political influences incidentally touching the grand action of the poem is exactly what we should have expected from a truthful chronicler. Phœnicia is famous for commerce, Egypt for medicine, Crete for the government of the seas. Always in the Iliad we stand upon sure ground, and we know where we are standing ; we are nowhere forced to rub our eyes, as in the *Morte d'Arthur*, uncertain whether we wake or dream, whether we are in Cornwall or Bretagne. Without question, there is an air of moderation, sobriety, and verisimilitude about Homer which distinctly marks him out as belonging to a different class from those mediæval story-tellers who gave to the word *romance* that peculiar meaning which in popular English it now universally bears. The general impression of the unprejudiced reader is decidedly in favour of the old faith, that the author of the Iliad is an honest bard, and the tale of Troy a true tale.

But first impressions, of course, may deceive, or at least they may require correction. In order to understand

whether any corrections of this kind require to be made on the narrative of the Trojan war, as we have it in Homer, we must consider carefully what events took place between that event and the age of the poet. For it is characteristic of tradition, as above remarked, to take no special note of chronology ; and provided only a series of events happening in the same country are originally connected, wear the same complexion and present the same attitude, they will be liable, to a certain extent, to run into one another in the popular imagination, and be confounded. An example from Scottish history will explain my meaning. From the martyrdom of Patrick Hamilton, in the year 1528, to the Revolution of 1688, we have a series of events in our national history, extending over the greater part of two centuries, in all of which the same struggle of the people of Scotland for the rights of the Christian laity, as against the claims of the hierarchy and the crown, is expressed. Now there can be no doubt in the mind of any one who knows our nation, that the traditions with regard to this struggle are engraved on our hearts with fleshly characters, altogether independent of any record of ecclesiastical transactions or printed books. The great events in that struggle, from the blazing fagots before the Cardinal's palace at St. Andrews to the savage execution of the youthful preacher Renwick in the Grassmarket, are all depicted in the background of every Scottish peasant's mind, in lines which no art of poet or painter could render more intense. Now I believe that if it had been in the genius of the Scottish people to celebrate the memory of those ages of heroic suffering and sacrifice, not in sermons and tracts, but in ballads and songs, and if these ballads, shortly after the struggle was over, say about the age of Queen Anne or George I., had been worked up into a great national epic

by some Presbyterian Homer, in this case, I say, supposing all written records abolished, and only the scanty popular tradition remaining, we should have in such an epic the whole historical truth of the great national struggle against Popery and Prelacy, only not an accurate chronological succession in all cases of the order of events. For the popular imagination, which preserved the memory of the events, must act, of course, according to its own laws, and these laws demand not the concatenation of a meagre record, but the combination of expressive moments. Some sort of chronology, however, would certainly be preserved, even in this case ; for we cannot suppose Dame Geddes with her three-legged stool flung in the face of the startled Dean in St. Giles' before the time of Knox, nor Knox again posterior to Peden the Prophet. But, while preserving the essential causal connexion of the principal personages, the popular tradition would make no curious work with mere chronology for its own sake. The haughty Cardinal might be planted upon a platform to launch fulminations against the stout Reformer many years after he was dead ; the Reformer might expatiate on righteousness, and temperance, and judgment before the dissolute Charles without offence ; Archbishop Laud and Archbishop Sharp might become one person, and the dribbling pedant James might fall out of the picture altogether, or degenerate, like Thersites, into a Court buffoon. In the same way, if there were any events of a kindred character between the war of Troy and the age of Homer—which interval we shall show presently may be safely stated at about two hundred years—we can, in the very nature of popular tradition, have no guarantee that confusion of such events did not actually take place. Now, such events did most unquestionably take place. The invasion of the kingdom of the Atridans by the Dorians was

speedily followed by extensive emigration of their descendants, along with other Achæan tribes, to the very coasts of Asia Minor, where the warlike events celebrated by Homer had taken place. Of these, the emigration to Lesbos, which took place sixty years after the fall of Troy, was the first;<sup>1</sup> and others succeeded, composed principally of Æolic and Ionic Greeks during the next hundred years, down to the colonization of the Æolo-Ionic city of Smyrna. And as these emigrations were not made into new and uninhabited lands, where waste districts had only to be seized, but into countries where other tribes, as the Carians, Leleges, and Pelasgi were already settled, they took place not without hostile collisions of various kinds, and these are precisely such collisions as in the popular imagination might most easily be confounded with the former expedition of Agamemnon. They had the same starting-point, the same progress, and the same result. If any person, therefore, should assert, as scholars of the greatest weight and judgment have asserted,<sup>2</sup> that there is an essential impossibility in the representation of Homer, that a Peloponnesian monarch like Agamemnon should have sailed against Troy from the Boeotian bay of Aulis, rather than from the head of his own Argolic gulf, and that the point of departure described by Homer plainly indicates a confusion between the early Argolic expedition under Agamemnon and some future one by the Achæan and Æolian emigrants, that found a place of confluence and of refuge from the invasive Dorians in the harbour of Aulis, to such an one I am not much moved to object. Whether

<sup>1</sup> Strabo, xiii. 582. Piehn, *Lesbiaca*, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Curtius (*Griechische Geschichte*, vol. i. p. 109), who, however, seems

inclined to let Agamemnon's expedition be swallowed up altogether by those

which followed it. So also Uschold, *Geschichte des Troischen Kriegs*.

we suppose Agamemnon and Achilles—the representatives of southern and northern Greece—to have actually set out together in the same expedition, or to be the distinct captains of two separate armaments, confounded in the popular imagination, so far as the essentials of history are concerned both the men and the facts remain. Here is a collision between two neighbouring peoples; a series of collisions; and in these hostile encounters Argos and Thessaly are the two countries that represent most effectively the hostile attitude of the Greeks on the west coasts of the *Æ*gean, to the Greeks and Barbarians on the east coast. This I believe as firmly as I believe that the Athenians conquered the Dorians at Marathon, and Xerxes at Salamis. If the records of the wars of the great Napoleon in Germany were blotted out, and a popular tradition of them alone should continue to exist through centuries, there would in all likelihood be some popular echo preserved, of diplomatic journeys between Austria and Prussia, but the real chronological connexion between Austerlitz and Jena would probably be lost. The glories of the Italian campaign, and the thunders of the battle of Leipzig, would obscure all minor facts, and break the chain of causal dependence. But the Napoleonic invasion and subjugation of Deutschland would remain, the precipitation from Moscow, the catastrophe at Leipzig,—the great dramatic lines of the history would be preserved, the direction of every great blow, the expression and attitude of every popular hero; and in reference to the soul and significance of the struggle, the living ballad might be more true than the lost chronicle. So much for the historical reality of the Iliad.

## DISSERTATION III.

### ON THE PERSONALITY AND PERSONAL HISTORY OF HOMER.

“WE Germans,” says G. W. NITZSCH, “have before other European nations this evil preference, that we have thoroughly darkened to our mental eye the genius of Homer, and so blotted his image, that scarcely a shadow of his personality remains.”<sup>1</sup> A remarkable confession this, and about a phenomenon certainly not less remarkable. But more remarkable than both perhaps it may seem, that this obscuration on a great point of literary history, proceeding from Germany, should have travelled across the German Ocean to sober, practical England, and manifested itself there in some notable cases, as a total eclipse of the historical faculty in reference to the early fortunes of Greece. In reference to Homer more especially, the distinguished author of a history of Greece, whose high merits are universally recognised, gives us the following utterance:—“Homer is no individual man, but the divine or heroic father of the gentle Homerids;” and this fatherhood is the mere unsubstantial product of the “ideas of worship and ancestry which constantly coalesced in the Grecian mind.”<sup>2</sup> Now, with regard to these Homerids, or minstrel brotherhoods of early Greece, who are here sup-

<sup>1</sup> *Sagenpoesie der Griechen.* 1852.

<sup>2</sup> *The History of Greece.* By George Grote, edit. 1862, vol. i. p. 517.

posed to be the real sons of a fantastic father, we shall have something to say by and bye ; meanwhile, the course of our previous inquiries leads us to presume that Homer is a real character, as much as Agamemnon, unless we are to suppose that the Hellenic memory had a peculiar retentiveness in preserving the personality of the famous old lord of the gate of lions at Mycenæ, while it allowed the authorship of the greatest poem ever written in the Greek language to be lost in the cloudy generality of an "eponymous hero." This, no doubt, was possible. A people, like an individual, may forget its greatest benefactor. But the fact is otherwise. The Greeks did not forget Homer. He was as living in their memory, through their whole history, as the person of Robert Burns is in the heart of every true Scot ; he has been a living fact in the intellectual consciousness of the cultivated world everywhere, except in a certain academical atmosphere of Germany, and in some English heads which have received the taint of misty negation from that quarter. Beyond this region there is no more doubt of the existence of a great poet who wrote a great poem called the Iliad, than there is of Alexander the Great, who Hellenized the East, or the great Julius, who Romanized the West. The belief in the personality of Homer, which Mr. Grote denies, rests directly and naturally on the double fact that there exists a great poem, which demands the existence of a great author, and that this authorship has been constantly recognised by the consciousness of the Greek people in the person of Homer. Assuming, in the meantime, that such a great poem really exists, the existence of the poet Homer, coming to us, as it does, through long channels of uncontradicted Greek tradition, ought to be accepted without further inquiry, as the most

obvious, natural, and rational way of explaining the existence of the poem. But the Greeks have not merely the general tradition that Homer was the author of the Iliad; they have special legends and popular tales with regard to this old minstrel, which, while they differ enough to prove that there existed no authentic written life of the poet, agree in not a few points, sufficient to indicate a strong root of reality out of which they grew. The scholar will perceive that I allude here to the lives of Homer current among the Greeks, which are specially alluded to in a well-known passage of Tatian,<sup>1</sup> and which will be found conveniently brought under one view in the excellent collection of Greek biographies by Westermann.<sup>2</sup> Now it is easy to say that these biographies come to us from no authentic voucher, that some of them are manifest forgeries, and that they are no more available for any purpose of substantial history than the stuff of which dreams are made; but when we look more narrowly into the matter, we find that whosoever the person might be who first put them into their present shape, he does not seem to have acted without materials. For the contents of these lives, when read by a discriminating eye, bear as manifestly the traces of local tradition, not arbitrary forgery, as the boulders on the Pomeranian flats tell of the Scandinavian granite ridges from which they were transported. I believe, with Welcker, that these compositions

<sup>1</sup> *Oratio ad Graecos*, 48 B.—Περὶ γὰρ τῆς ποιήσεως τοῦ Ὁμήρου, γένους τε αὐτοῦ καὶ χρόνου καθ' ὃν ἤκμασεν, προπρεύποντας οἱ πρεσβύτατοι, Θεαγένης τε ὁ Ρηγίνος κατὰ Καρβύσην γεγονός, Στησίμβροτος τε ὁ Θεοῖς καὶ Ἀρτι-

μαχος ὁ Κολοφώνιος, Ἡρόδοτος τε ὁ Ἀλικαρνασσεῖς καὶ Διονύσιος ὁ Ολύν-

καὶ Φιλόχορος ὁ Ἀθηναῖος Μεγαλέδης τε καὶ Χαμαλέων οἱ Περιπατηταὶ τοιοί ἐπειτα γραμματικοὶ Ζηρόδοτος, Ἀριστοφάνης, Καλλίμαχος, Κράτης, Ἐρατοσθένης, Ἀρισταρχος, Ἀπολλόδωρος.

<sup>2</sup> *Vitae et scriptores Graeci Minores*. Ed. Westermann. Brunswick, 1845.

are a strange and quaint old mixture of unconscious imaginative action, honestly working upon a nucleus of substantial local tradition, along, no doubt, with a considerable amount of purely literary forgery from later hands;<sup>1</sup> but the forged element is generally betrayed, partly by its absurdity, partly by its evident invention to serve a purpose—as in the genealogy given in one of the lives to connect Homer with Orpheus and Hesiod—while the genuine antique fragments are seen clinging closely round recognised Homeric localities, as popular tradition loves to do, as Stirling Bridge still speaks of Wallace, Lochleven of Queen Mary, and Turnberry Castle of King Robert Bruce. There are in all no less than nine of these Homeric biographies;<sup>2</sup> but when analysed they resolve into two principal varieties, the one of which makes Homer an *Æolian* Greek, the other an Ionian. But in order that the reader may be able to judge for himself of the character of these documents, which the negative tendencies of recent criticism have, in my opinion, unwisely cast aside, I shall translate that one of them which bears the name of Herodotus, not because I have the remotest idea that the great historian had any hand in its composition, but because I think it contains the greatest amount of truth, and because it carries embedded some curious fragments of old Hellenic

<sup>1</sup> Lauer is of the same opinion. *Auf zwei Quellen, SAGE und COMBINATION ist die ganze Ueberlieferung von Homer zurückzuführen. Sie darf weder als GESCHICHTE noch als ERDICHTUNG, sondern muss als SAGE betrachtet werden.*—*Geschichte Homer. Poesie.* Berlin, 1831; p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> (1.) One ascribed to Herodotus; (2.) to Plutarch; (3.) Proclus the grammarian; (4.) The γέτος Ὀμήρου, No. 4 in Westermann; Cramer, *Anecd. Par.* iii. p. 97; and Leo Allatius, *De Patria Hom.* p. 28; (5.) The fifth in Westermann; Leo Allat., p. 26. (6.) in the Madrid ms., Iriartes' Catalogue; (7.) Suidas, Westermann; (8.) Περὶ Ὀμήρου καὶ Ἡσίδου ἀγῶνος, Barnes's *Homer*, Goettling's *Hesiod*, Westermann; (9.) The anonymous essay, Περὶ Ὀμήρου ποιῆσεως, in Barnes's *Homer*, vol. i. p. 29.

popular poetry, which some students of Homer will read with pleasure:—

“ Herodotus of Halicarnassus, concerning the birth and life and age of Homer, setteth forth as follows, having sought to arrive at the greatest exactness on all points:—After the Æolian city of Cumæ was founded, various Greek tribes from different quarters assembled there, especially from Magnesia, among whom was one Melanopus, the son of Ithagenes, the son of Krithon, a man not overladen with the wealth of this world, but much shortened in his circumstances. This Melanopus married in Cumæ the daughter of Homires, and from this marriage was born to him a female child, by him named Cretheis. Now Melanopus and his wife died, but his daughter he left in charge to a man, his friend Cleanax of Argos. In the course of time it happened that the maid, having privily known a man, became pregnant. At first the matter was kept secret, but Cleanax, having become aware of it, was displeased, and having called Cretheis aside, blamed her severely, setting forth the reproach which must attach to her and her relations among the citizens. He therefore devises the following plan: the Cumæans at that time happened to be colonizing the head of the Hermæan gulf, and Theseus gave the name of Smyrna to the city which they founded there, in memory of his own wife of the same name. Now this Theseus was one of the first of the Thessalians who settled in Cumæ, descended from Eumelus, the son of Admetus, a person of good substance. Thither Cleanax sends Cretheis to Ismenias the Boeotian, one of the settlers, who happened to be his friend. Some time thereafter, Cretheis, being now far gone in pregnancy, went out with some other women to hold a festival on the banks of the river Meles, and there gave birth to Homer, not blind, as is commonly reported, and she called her son Melesigenes, that is, the child of the river Meles. At the first, therefore, Cretheis continued to live with Ismenias, but as time went on she went forth, and, obtaining work, now from this person and now from that,

<sup>1</sup> In Wolf's *Homer* (Lips., 1807), | fragments are printed at the end, under and some of the older editions, these | the name 'Εγγράμματα

maintained her child by the labour of her hands. Now there lived in Smyrna at that time a certain man, by name Phemius, who taught boys their letters, and other branches of good learning. This man, being a lone man, hired Cretheis to spin the wool for him, which he received in name of fees from the boys whom he taught, and she comported herself in his house with much decency and sobriety, and gave contentment to Phemius. At length he asked her to live with him as his wife, bringing forward many inducements, and especially promising to adopt her son, who, he said, being bred and educated by him, would become a man of note, for he saw plainly that he was a boy of good parts, and of an excellent understanding. Thus he importuned her until she yielded. And of a truth the child was of an admirable genius, and, being brought up with great care, he soon surpassed all his compeers, and as years went on, being grown to man's estate, he showed himself not a whit inferior to Phemius himself in learning. And when Phemius died he left all he had to his son ; and soon after he lost his mother also. Thereupon Melesigenes gave himself to the work of teaching, and acting now altogether for himself, was held in great admiration both by the natives of the place, and by strangers who came from a distance. For Smyrna was a great seat of merchandise, and much corn was exported there, supplied in great abundance by the rich country that lieth all around. Now the strangers, as often as they had leisure from their business, came to Melesigenes, sat with him, and listened to his wisdom. Among them was a ship-captain, named Mentes, who had sailed thither for corn from Leucadia, a shrewd and well-taught man for the age, who persuaded Melesigenes to give up teaching, and sail with him, promising to give him wages and supply his wants, and urging him strongly, while he was yet young, to travel and see the world. And I doubt not he was much moved, chiefly by this consideration, for it is likely that even then his mind was inclined towards poetry. Accordingly, giving up his school, he sailed away with Mentes, and wherever the vessel put in, he observed everything carefully, asking many questions.

“ After a long voyage to the extreme West, they returned from Tyrsenia and Iberia to Ithaca ; and there Melesigenes was afflicted

with a sore malady in his eyes, so that Mentes must leave him behind for the sake of cure, with a dear friend of his own called Mentor, the son of Alcimus, a native of the island, and with many injunctions to treat him kindly till he should return. Mentor tended him carefully ; for truly he was a man of good substance, and well reported of for justice and for hospitality, more than any man in those parts. Here it was that Melesigenes learnt the story of Ulysses and his wanderings. Now, the people of ITHACA say that while he lived with them he became blind ; but I say that his eyes were whole, and that he lost his sight afterwards at Colophon ; and the Colophonians bear witness to what I say. Soon afterwards Mentes, sailing back from Leucadia, came to Ithaca, and took Melesigenes on board, who, for a good season, continued to sail with him. Finally, on arriving at Colophon, the malady in his eyes became more severe, and ended in blindness. And now, having lost his sight, he left Colophon, and, arriving at Smyrna, he began the practice of poetry. But as time went on, being straitened for a livelihood, he determined to go to Cumæ ; and, travelling through the plain of the Hermus, he arrives at Neonteichos, a colony of the Cumæans, planted eight years later than the mother city. There, it is said, he stopped at a leather-cutter's shop, and composed these verses, which were, indeed, the first that he ever publicly uttered :—

' Hear the prayer of the hungry, houseless, wandering stranger,  
Ye who inhabit the town, the large-eyed daughter of Cumæ,  
Ye who sit at the roots of the lofty, leafy Sardena,  
Ye who drink ambrosian draughts from the godlike-streaming,  
Silvery-smiling Hermus, of Jove immortal begotten.'

" Now the leather-cutter's name was Tychius, and when he heard the verses he determined to entertain the singer ; for he pitied the poor blind wanderer, and told him to enter into his workshop and share in what he had to give. And the poet entered, and taking his seat in the shop recited some verses in the presence of certain of the inhabitants, on the expedition of Amphiarus against Thebes, as also some of his hymns to the gods. Moreover, when a discussion arose among the hearers, he delivered his own sentiments in

such fashion as to excite great admiration. For some time, therefore, he remained at Neonteichos, making to himself a livelihood from his poetry. And even unto my day the inhabitants of the place delighted to show the seat where he sat and recited his verses ; and they have the utmost reverence for the place, at which also a poplar-tree grows, which they say was planted at the time the minstrel arrived amongst them. But after some years, finding himself hard pressed to make a livelihood, he determined to go to Cumæ, if belike he might prosper better there ; and on leaving Neonteichos he wrote the following couplet :—

‘ Bear me swiftly, my feet, to the town of the good and the godly,  
Men who honour a guest, and kindly welcome a stranger.’

“ Journeying from Neonteichos, he went to Cumæ through Larissa, this being the shortest road ; and as the Cumæans say, at the request of the relations of Midas, the son of Gordias, he wrote the following inscription, which even now is read on the sepulchral stone of that prince :—

‘ Here on the tomb of Midas I stand, a copper-red maiden ;  
While the fountains shall flow, and the trees are green in the forest,  
While the sun shall shine, and the clear white moon in the welkin.  
Here I stand on the tomb, bedew'd with tears of the pious,  
Telling to all that pass— **HERE LIES THE BODY OF MIDAS !** ’

“ Arriving at Cumæ, he sat down in the seats where the old men were wont to assemble, and there recited his verses, and with his discourse vastly delighted all who heard him. And perceiving that the Cumæans were pleased with his verses, he proposed to them that if they would maintain him at the public expense, he would make their city famous. Those who heard him were pleased with the request, and bade him go to the Council, and place before them his proposal, whereto they promised their help. He followed their advice ; and the Council being met, he was taken by the officer to whom this ministry belonged to the Council-hall, where, standing up before the assembly, he spoke to the same effect concerning his

entertainment that he had before done among the citizens, and then, going out, sat down to await their award.

“The Councillors then deliberated what answer to give; and though several of those who had heard him before were willing to grant his request, one is said to have opposed his petition for other reasons, and specially, because, said he, if we are to give entertainment to blind minstrels, we shall soon have a great and useless multitude on our shoulders. From this circumstance he received the name of *Homeros*; for in the dialect of the Cumæans this word signifies *blind*, and his old name of *Melesigenes* fell into disuse. But in the Council the voice of the chief magistrate prevailed, that Homer should receive no entertainment, which being announced to the poet, he bewailed himself and uttered these verses:—

‘ Woe’s me, sad is the lot which Jove, the father, assign’d me,  
 Nursing my infant strength on the knees of a gracious mother,  
 Even the city whose towers, by the counsel of Jove supernal,  
 Phricon’s people uprear’d, strong riders on mettlesome horses,  
 Sweeping the fields of strife like fires that blaze in the forest,  
 Even Æolian Smyrna, the queen of the shining Ægean,  
 Smyrna, with streets interflow’d by the limpid stream of the Meles;  
 Thence the daughters of Jove, the glorious maidens, my convoy,  
 Came with me to give praise to the land and the people of Cumæ;  
 But they disdain’d the sacred song of the god-sent minstrel;  
 Foolish! his folly shall rue who cruelly counsell’d my sorrow.  
 I the fate will endure which a god ordain’d at my birth-hour,  
 I the reproach will bear with a manly-hearted endeavour;  
 But no longer my limbs in the sacred streets of Cumæ  
 Willing shall walk; within me my heart doth mightily move me  
 Far to wander abroad a minstrel poor and unfriended.’

“After this he went from Cumæ to Phocæa, leaving a curse behind him, to the effect that no poet should ever arise to sing their deeds. Arriving at Phocæa he followed the same manner of life, reciting his verses in the public places where the citizens met. Now there lived at Phocæa at this time a certain Thestorides, a schoolmaster, but not an honest man. This man, seeing the poetry of

Homer that it was excellent, proposed to him that he would give him kindly entertainment if he would make over to him the verses he had made, and any others that might follow. Homer felt that he must do this, for he was poor, and in need of all things. And now, living with Thestorides, he composed the lesser Iliad, of which the first lines are—

‘Troy I sing, and the plain in mettlesome steeds abounding,  
Where the Achæans, the servants of Mars, were sated with sorrows,’

as also the poem called *Phœcæis*, according to the account of the Phœcæans themselves. Thereafter Thestorides, having got this poem, and all the others made by Homer, copied out, determined to leave the place, and carry them with him, after which he despised and neglected the bard. Then Homer wrote this couplet—

‘O Thestorides, sorrows like snares are planted for man; but  
Thoughtless he lives, as if harm might never approach to his  
dwelling.’

But Thestorides straightway passed over to Chios, and began to teach there, and by the public recitation of the poems gained for himself much praise and profit, while Homer continued as before at Phœcæa making a scanty living by his verses. Not long afterwards, certain Chian merchants arrived at Phœcæa, and hearing the minstrel sing some verses which they had heard from Thestorides in Chios, told him that in that island a person was living who was much admired for reciting those same verses; whereupon Homer knew who he must be, and resolved to sail for Chios, and going down to the harbour he found no ship-bound for the island, but one about to sail to Erythræ for wood. Now Homer liked the thought to make the voyage by Erythræ, and addressing the sailors, desired to be taken on board. They willingly granted his request, and ordered him to enter the ship; whereupon he thanked them heartily, and sitting down on the deck, spoke the following verses:—

‘Hear me, Poseidon, thou king of the waves, thou strong earth-shaker,  
Lord of Helicon’s hill and the broad fields skirting the mountain,  
Grant a favouring breeze, and a scaithless return to the sailors,

Lords of the ship, that give to the wandering minstrel a convoy ;  
 Grant to me at the foot of the high-ridged mountain of Mimas  
 Men to know with pious intent, and kindly to strangers ;  
 Grant me to punish the man who filched my songa, and offended  
 Jove, who protects the rights of the board that is spread for the  
 stranger.'

"When they arrived at Erythræ with a favourable breeze, Homer stayed on board, and next morning asked a sailor to lead him into the city. One of them accordingly led him, and when he found the country there rocky and mountainous he made these three verses :—

' Bountiful earth, all-giver, the mother of pleasureful riches,  
 How to some thou art kind with green slopes grassy and fruitful,  
 Harsh to whom thou hatest, with sapless, gritty embracement !

"On reaching the town of the Erythræans, he asked them if there was any ship to Chios. Now there was no merchant vessel at that time in the harbour ; but a person who had known him at Phœcea led him to where the fishermen's boats were anchored, and immediately they found certain fishermen about to sail to Chios, whom his guide begged to take the blind minstrel with them ; but they, paying no heed to his words, sailed away ; whereupon Homer spoke these verses :—

' Sailors that plough the sea, like dismal Fate are your fortunes,  
 Like in your lives to the startled birds that scream through the  
 tempest ;  
 Honour the god who sits on the throne of loftiest counsel,  
 Jove, whose wrath shall smite his head who slighteth the strangers.'

But the boat was rudely handled by contrary winds, and it chanced that the men were driven back to the place they had left, and there they found Homer sitting on the shore, who straightway knowing of their return, said : ' You, O strangers, a contrary wind has driven back, but take me even now and you shall enjoy a prosperous voyage.' At these words the fishermen repented that they had not at first taken him on board, and bidding him embark, set sail and landed on the shore of Chios. Then the sailors betook themselves to their

work ; and Homer during the night remained on the shore, but early in the morning began to move about, and came to a place which is called Pitys, that is the *Pine-tree* ; and as he was resting there a fir-cone fell on his head ; whereupon he spoke those verses :—

‘ Better the fruit, O pine, which is born on the wind-swept Ida,  
High on the brow of the hill that looks from its folds on the  
green-clad  
Beautiful vales ; there iron shall grow to labouring mortals,  
When the Cebrenian miners shall plant their huts on the mountains.’

For at that time the Cumæans were preparing to plant a colony at Cebrenia, on Ida ; and there is iron in that quarter. Then Homer, rising up, followed certain goats, whose cry guided him ; but as he advanced he came up to some dogs which barked at him ; whereupon he cried out. Immediately Glaucus—for so was hight the goatherd of that country—ran up deftly and called off the dogs. Then seeing the stranger, he marvelled much how a blind man could come alone into those parts, and approaching the bard, he asked who he was, and what he wanted, and how he had found his way into these uninhabited and pathless places. To which Homer replied by telling him all his story, which moved his compassion exceedingly ; for this Glaucus, as it appears, was a prudent man, and able to discern merit ; and on hearing the bard’s story, he took him up to his shieling, and kindled a fire, and prepared supper, and invited him to partake. And while they were eating, the dogs, who had got nothing, went on barking, according to their wont ; whereupon Homer addressed the following verses to the goatherd :—

‘ Glaucus, thou feeder of goats, give ear to the stranger that loves  
thee ;  
Kindly consider thy dogs, and give them their meat in the court-  
yard  
First of all ; the dog is the first to hear when the stranger  
Neareth thy gate, and near to thy fold the wolf is prowling.’

This the goatherd heard with great admiration, and they seasoned the supper with agreeable discourse, Homer narrating to his host

all his travels, and the cities which he had visited ; whereat his host marvelled exceedingly, and listened eagerly till late o' the night, when they both went to bed, and slept soundly. Next day Glaucon bethought himself to go to his master and inform him about his guest. Accordingly he left his goats in charge of a fellow-servant, and leaving Homer in the house, told him to remain till he returned. Then he went down to Bolissos, which was a place near at hand, and told his master about the minstrel, all the truth, in what fashion he had arrived, how he had moved his admiration, and what he thought should be done with him. But his master gave scant heed to his words, and said that he showed small wit in opening his house to every cripple or blind beggar ; nevertheless he was willing to see the stranger. Whereupon Glaucon returned to Homer, and brought him to his master, who forthwith entering into conversation with him, found him to be a man of passing good parts, and cunning in many ways, and requested him forthwith to remain with him, and undertake the education of his sons ; for it chanced that he had sons of an age to require a capable teacher. With this request Homer complied ; and while he lived with him composed the 'Kercopes' and the 'Battle of the Frogs and Mice,' and the 'Battle of the Starlings,' and the poem called 'The Fieldfares,' and his other humorous poems, by which he acquired great reputation in the town. But Thestorides, directly he heard of the presence of Homer in the island, made off. Then Homer requested his kind entertainer to take him to Chios, the chief city of the island ; and establishing himself there, he opened a school and taught poetry. And the Chioites esteemed him for a passing clever man, and followed him with much admiration. And the poet prospered amongst them, and gathered substance, and married a wife, by whom he had two daughters, of whom the one remained unmarried, and the other was married to a man of Chios. And now, applying himself with all his might to poetry, he showed a grateful piety towards all his benefactors by celebrating them in his verses, specially Mentor, who had tended him so kindly in Ithaca when suffering from the evil in his eyes ; this man, therefore, he put into the *Odyssey*, making him the companion of Ulysses, and a man se

just and faithful that the Ithacan king, when he went to Troy, left him in charge of his house and family. And on many occasions, meaning to honour Mentor, in his *Odyssey* he causeth the goddess Athena to appear in his likeness. Likewise to Phemius, his early teacher, he paid largely the debt which he owed above all, in these verses :—

‘Then in the hands of Phemius a lyre was placed by the herald,  
Phemius, foremost of men to sing sweet songs from the Muses.’

And again :—

‘Then he played on his harp, and sang a beautiful ballad.’

He makes mention also of the pilot of the ship with whom he sailed about, and saw many cities and countries, whose name was Mentes, in these verses :—

‘Mentes I hight, the son of Anchialus skiful-minded ;  
All the oar-loving Paphians honour the sceptre of Mentes.’

Also he showed his grateful remembrance of Tychius, the leather-cutter, who entertained him at Neonteichos, in these lines :—

‘Ajax then advanced, his shield like a tower before him,  
Broad and brazen, with seven ox-hides all firmly compacted,  
Even the buckler which Tychius made, whose home was in Hyla,  
Tychius, passing all men in the skiful cutting of leather.’

And from this art of poetry, which he now practised largely, Homer got for himself a name through all Ionia, and even as far as Hellas. And certain persons came to him when his praise was so sounded in Chios, and advised him to make a journey to Greece. This notion pleased him not a little, and he desired vehemently to go thither. And while he was brooding on this project, he bethought him that, whereas Argos had received many and glorious praises from poets, Athens had scarcely been mentioned ; whereupon he introduced into the *Iliad* certain famous verses, glorifying that city and its kings and heroes. Of Erechtheus he speaketh in this couplet :—

‘ Land of Erechtheus the lofty-hearted, the king whom Athena  
Bred, the daughter of Jove, and the corn-giving Earth was his  
mother.’

And of Menestheus, in these lines—

‘ Them Menestheus commanded the son of Peteus, whom no man  
Treading this mortal earth excell’d in the craft of controlling  
Steeds that snort for the fray, and shield-bearing men in the battle.’

Likewise the Telamonian Ajax, in connexion with Athena, he introduceth thus :—

‘ Ten good vessels and two the Salaminian Ajax  
Led to the war, and placed them beside the Athenian galleys.’

And in the *Odyssey* he maketh Pallas Athena, when leaving Ulysses, go to Athens unto her favourite abode :—

‘ Then to Marathon’s strand, and the fair broad-fielded Athens,  
Pallas departed, and sought the well-built hall of Erechtheus.’

Having put these verses into his poems, he set about devising how he might voyage to Hellas, and with this intent crossed to Samos. And on the day when he landed there, it chanced the people of the place were keeping the feast of Apatouria. And one of the Samians, who had known the poet in Chios, recognised him, and informed the members of the brotherhood of his arrival, and extolled him highly to the people. Then the heads of certain members of the brotherhoods invited him to attend the celebration, and Homer did so willingly. And as he was going along the road to join the assembly, he met certain women on a cross-road sacrificing to Hecate, the rearer of young persons ; and the priestess being displeased at meeting a blind man when she was performing sacred rites, cried out, *O man, take thyself hence from the sacrifice !* But Homer was wroth at her uncivil salutation, and asked his guide who the person was that thus rudely accosted him, and to which of the gods she was sacrificing ; and on his guide replying that she was a priestess of Hecate, he immediately spoke these verses :—

‘ Hear me, Hecate ! rearer of youths, and grant that this woman  
Never may know sweet love from lads that are lusty and bloom-  
ing ;  
Frosty delight may she find with hoary temples and bald crowns,  
Slow, and dull, and blunt, and fretful with reasonless passion.’

And when he came to the house where the members of the brotherhood were celebrating the feast, whether it was that he was delighted to see a cheerful fire blazing, or displeased, as some say, because the room was cold and comfortless, even as he stood on the threshold he uttered the following verses :—

‘ Children bring glory to men ; strong towers are the praise of a  
city ;  
Steeds are the pride of the plain ; swift ships the boast of the  
ocean ;  
Riches adorn a house ; and when kings in the Forum are seated,  
Glad is the eye that beholds the purple pomp of their session,—  
But of the family hall, the praise and the pride and the glory,  
Boast and honour supreme is a fire when it cheerily blazes.’

And thereafter he entered the room, and reclined at the table with the members of the brotherhood, who marvelled much at his wisdom and eloquence ; and in that house he slept all night. But in the morning early he departed ; and certain potters, who were kindling their kiln-fire, having heard that he was a wise man, asked him to sing them a song, adding, that as a fee they would give him of their potter’s work, and whatsoever else they had. Therefore Homer sang to them the following verses, which are called—

‘ THE LAY OF THE KILN-HOUSE.

‘ Give me a poet’s reward, and I will give you a poem,  
Potters, becoming your trade,—the praise of the clay and the kiln-  
house.  
Finely shaped be your jars, your cups and platters and basons ;  
Finely dried in the fire, and fair be the price that they bring  
you.  
Whether in market they stand, or about the doors of the buyer,

Well may they pay your toil, with something behind for the singer !

But if shameless ye prove, and swindle the bard that belaunds you,  
Then my song shall invoke all bane and bale on your kiln-house.  
Smasher and Crashier shall come, the lubberly fiends of the kiln-house,

Burner the cobold, and Crudeman that worketh much woe to the kiln-house ;

Threshold and hall be destroyed, and all upturn'd be the kiln-house ;

Wail and weeping ascend from the men that live by the kiln-house !  
Even as jaw upon jaw an angry stallion grindeth,  
So may the pots of the potter be ground to dust in the kiln-house !  
Hither the drugful Circe shall come, the daughter of Helios,  
Drugging the pot of the potter, and breathing a pest on the kiln-house ;

Hither shall Chiron come with the roistering troops of the Centaurs,  
Hither the monsters that fled from the hands of the sturdy Alcides,  
Riding and ramping in pride o'er the sharded wreck of the kiln-house.

Then the potters shall weep, when they reap the fruit of their falsehood,

Then the bard shall rejoice when an evil god shall destroy them.  
Whoso ventures to look from the cope of the flame-wreathed kiln-house,

Him the fire shall burn and blacken like bricks in the kiln-house !  
Men shall see it, and learn to be just in the cot and the kiln-house.'

" After this he spent the winter in Samos, and made some small gains going about to the houses of the wealthy, and singing such verses as the following, which are called *εἰρετώνη*, or the *Song of the Wreath*, which was hung up at the doors on occasion of certain festivals :

' Turn we now to the house of the wealthy lord of the manor,  
Mighty to do, and loud to command, and prosperous alway.

Wide be open'd, ye doors, and welcome the bountiful riches  
 Eager to enter your halls, and with riches jocund enjoyment,  
 Mirth and pleasureful peace. Your jars be full of good victuals,  
 Full of good wine your casks, and of barley bannocks your baskets.  
 So your son's fair bride shall come to this house in a four-wheel'd  
 Wain, by stout-footed mules well drawn, with beautiful trappings;  
 Then herself in the house shall walk on a floor with amber  
 Brightly inlaid, and spin rich purple cloths in her chamber.  
 Hear my yearly refrain ! each year I come, like the swallow ;  
 Spurn me not from your door !'

And also these two lines—

‘ Give, an’ it please you to give—if not, no longer we tarry,  
 Truly we seek not to dwell with so saucy a lord of the manor !’

And indeed these his verses were wont to be sung by the children long time afterwards in Samos, when they went about in bands at the feast of Apollo. When the winter was past, Homer now began to carry out his purpose to go to Athens ; and embarking in a ship with certain Samians, he came to the island of Ios, and hove-to, not in the harbour of the town, but in a bay on the strand. At this place a sickness fell upon him, and disembarking from the vessel, he slept on land by the shore. And whiles they were detained here some time by contrary winds, many of the inhabitants of the town came to speak with Homer, and departed filled with much marvel at the abundance of his wisdom and the richness of his discourse. Now it chanced one day that while the people of the town and the sailors of the ship were sitting beside the poet, certain fisher-boys came to that part of the strand, and landing from their boat, came up to them, and said, ‘ Hark ye, gentle sirs, we will propound you a riddle, if it seemeth you good ;’ and forthwith they propounded this verse :—

‘ What we took we left, and what we took not we brought with us.’

And none of those present being able to expound the riddle, the fisher-boys then explained how, having gone to fish and caught

nothing, they sat down on the beach and began to louse themselves, and as many lice as they caught they flung away, but those they could not catch they took home with them ; which, when Homer heard, he made this couplet :—

‘ Truly not rich was the blood that flow’d in the veins of your fathers,  
Thin the land that they till’d, and few the sheep that they pas-  
tured.’

“ After this the sickness of the poet increased so much that he died thereof on the island, but not of vexation at not being able to interpret the riddle, as some foolishly assert. After his death he was buried near the shore by the sailors and the citizens, who had been so delighted with his discourse. And the people of Ios, many years afterwards, when poetry had begun to decline, wrote this couplet on his tomb :—

‘ This green sod doth cover the sacred head of the minstrel,  
Godlike Homer, who sang the praise of kings and of heroes.’

“ Now, that Homer was an *Æolic* Greek, and neither an Ionian nor a Dorian, hath, I think, been sufficiently shown by me in the above, and will be further evident from what follows. It seemeth plain that a poet of his excellence, in describing human customs and manners, will either invent what he thinks the best, or, failing this, describe the existing manners of his own country. Judge ye now whether, in the following lines, describing a sacrifice, he has followed what he thought the best according to his own conception of what was right, or has not rather described the sacrificial practices of his own country ; for thus he says—

‘ Back they drew the neck, and cut the throat of the victim,  
Flay’d it then, cut out the thighs, and decently wrapp’d them,  
Double-plied with fat, and with small bits of the raw flesh,  
Prinkt it o’er, that the gods might taste the whole of the victim.’

“ Now, here there is no mention made of the loin, which is generally used in the sacrifice ; for the *Æolians* are the only tribe of the

Greeks that do not burn the loin. The following two verses also show plainly that the author was an Æolian, who describes the customs common among his own people :—

‘ Then the old man bound the thighs, and pour’d out the purple  
Wine : the young men stood with five-prong’d forks in their right  
hands ; ’

for the Æolians are the only Greek people that roast the inwards on five-pronged forks—the other Greeks using forks with three prongs : and for *πέντε* the Æolians say *πέμπτε*. Now let this be enough to have spoken of the birth and life and death of the poet. But concerning his age, from the following considerations one may form a just estimate. One hundred and thirty years from the expedition of Agamemnon and Menelaus, Lesbos was colonized in cities, having formerly possessed no city. Twenty years after Lesbos followed the founding of Cumæ, called the Æolian or Phricotian Cumæ. After the founding of Cumæ eighteen years, Smyrna was colonized by the Cumæans, and here Homer was born. And from the birth of Homer to the expedition of Xerxes against Greece, when he made a bridge over the Hellespont, were six hundred and twenty-two years. From these fixed points it is easy for any one to make the calculation, being guided by the Athenian archonships. Between Homer and the Trojan war, the just interval was one hundred and sixty and eight years.”

Now, taking this document as a text, we shall no doubt have cause to observe, in the first place, with Lauer, “that the wish to know something about a matter of which we know nothing has always acted as a great inventive power amongst men ;” and we may hesitate perhaps to use the strong language of Welcker—“ *Unschätzbar ist uns jenes Herodotische Leben*”—“that old life that bears the name of Herodotus is for us invaluable ;” but if, on the other hand, we fling it hastily aside, under the impression that it was put together out of nothing by some cobwebby grammarian at

Alexandria, in the first or second century, we shall err greatly ; for we have positive information that as early as the time of Cambyses, that is 525 B.C., one Theagenes of Rhegium began to put the local traditions about Homer into a literary shape ;<sup>1</sup> and he knows little about the tenacity of local memory in such matters, who can believe that, in face of the whole tradition of the colleges of minstrels in Chios and Ios, brought down directly from Homer, any mere literary vapour, in Magna Grecia then, or in Hellenized Egypt three centuries after, could coolly sit down and impose an altogether baseless biography of their great historical poet on the Greek people. On the contrary, those who perpetrate literary forgeries, just because they know what Plato says, that a lie is naturally hateful both to men and gods, always take care, as Macpherson did, when he palmed his Ossianic epic on the British public, to have so much of the old bleached bones of reality about the production that a great mass of influential people shall be favourably disposed to accept it as authentic. The only difficulty, therefore, in such cases, will be to decide how much of the solid old fact is recognisable in the midst of this luxuriant growth of agreeable fictions ; and here, I willingly confess, the problem will often be difficult to solve, sometimes impossible. But in order to bring out the truth of this Homeric case, I will, as before (p. 34), suppose a modern instance. I have already said that the great pegs on which popular tradition hangs are places. Suppose, therefore, there were no literary record of the manly Scotch reformer, John Knox, preserved in our libraries ; suppose Scotland at the present moment were a country altogether without books ; in this case nothing is more certain than that somewhere in the bosom of the Pres-

<sup>1</sup> Tatian, p. 82, *supra*.

byterian Church, that is, everywhere in the hearts of the Scottish people, we should have a traditional life of the great reformer. Some German professor or cold Comtist philosphaster might perhaps write a book to prove that there was no such person as Knox—that he was only an eponymous hero of a certain brotherhood of severe self-mortifying Christians, curiously portrayed by a London literary gentleman called Buckle; but the people of Scotland would still believe that their Presbyterian Church did not spring into existence without a cause, and that this cause was simply a man of such high heroism, lofty courage, and unflinching purpose as could look scarlet-hatted cardinals, triple-crowned Popes, blazing fagots, and weeping queens in the face without wincing. They would therefore possess the biography of Knox, be assured, graven as deeply in the hearts of thousands as the furrows are hollowed out by the tempest in the dark rock-forehead of Glencoe. They would show the stranger the quaint old house where he lived in Edinburgh High Street, which they had preserved with religious care; they would tell of the huckster-booths of the Lawnmarket, and the church of St. Giles where he preached; and of the dis-honour which had been done to his bones, cast as they were into the Cowgate, without memorial, by an oblivious generation, a generation raising statues to crowned debauchees like Charles II. and George IV., but void of all reverence towards the stout-hearted prophet to whom they owed their existence as a people; and they would tell you also of various accidents of outward life that had happened to their national hero at Gifford, at Long Niddry, at St. Andrews, at Perth, at Maybole, at Torphichen, in Edinburgh, none of which perhaps you might consider duly authenticated, in the sense in which lawyers require acts to be formally

vouched, by writs, but all of which, taken together, you might have good reason to believe conveyed a fair impression of the manner of life of the great Scotch reformer, of the stage on which he acted, and the atmosphere which he breathed. Now this is exactly the sort of impression which, in my opinion, ought to be made on a philosophical mind by the traditions about the life of Homer, contained in the biographical documents which we are now discussing. I should consider these traditions to be a reasonable guarantee of the following facts:—(1.) That such a poet existed; (2.) That he was a native of the coast of Asia Minor, between the Propontis and the Hermus, occupied by Æolian and Ionian settlers from Greece; (3.) That he followed the profession of a wandering minstrel; and (4.) That the different cities on the coast of Asia, Smyrna, Chios, Cumæ, Colophon, etc., mentioned in the biographies, if not the actual scene of the actions to which they are attached in the legends, were certainly the principal stage on which he acted, and the atmosphere which he breathed. This I would believe broadly in the first place, and then I should proceed to inquire whether there were anything in the character of the poems themselves which might tend either to strengthen the general impression of the tradition, or to give a more definite trustworthiness to some of its details. Let us, however, in reference to the present question, first take notice of some of the principal variations of the popular legend, as they appear in the different versions. These variations affect principally the important fact of the parentage of the poet, and the determination of his native city. That seven cities contended for the honour of having given birth to Homer has become a matter of popular quotation. They are mentioned in the commonplace book of Aulus

Gellius, a Roman grammarian, who flourished in the second century, thus—

Ἐπτὰ πόλεις διερίζοντι περὶ βίβαν Ὁμήρου·  
Σμύρνα, Ῥόδος, Κολοφών, Σαλαμίν, Ἰος, Ἀργος, Ἀθῆναι—<sup>1</sup>

“Seven fair cities contend for the birth of great Homer : Smyrna, Salamis, Ios, and Rhodus, Colophon, Argos, and Athens;”

and another collector of curious historical scraps informs us that Ptolemy Philopater, the fourth of that dynasty, erected a ὁμήρειον or temple in honour of Homer, in the midst of which the poet was represented sitting, while round about him—the building being probably circular like the temple of the Sibyl at Tivoli—were placed the statues of all the cities that claimed to be his birthplace.<sup>2</sup> It is both interesting and instructive to look into these claims in detail; for here, as in the case of that sort of action which in our Scottish law courts we call a “*multiplepounding*,” that is, an action in which a number of persons give in claims before the judge to some fund not specially apportioned, we shall find that a very slight scrutiny is sufficient to throw the majority of the claimants out of court in the very threshold of the suit; and that of the remaining few a more nice examination gives a decided preponderance to one. The seven cities of the above couplet were not the only places that put forth their claim for some part in the rich blood that coursed through the old minstrel's veins. There was indeed no end of the most baseless fictions in regard to this matter—fictions which generally refute themselves by their absurdity, and were fit for nothing from the beginning but to afford fuel for the satirical flame of the great Hellenic Voltaire; <sup>3</sup> as for example, one which said

<sup>1</sup> *Noct. Att.* iii. 11. *Cicerō, Pro*

*Archia*, 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ælian, Var. Hist.* xiii. 21.

<sup>3</sup> προσελθὼν ἐγώ Ὁμήρῳ τῷ παιητῷ,  
σχολῆς οὐσης ἀμφοῖν, τὰ τε ἄλλα ἐπιν-  
θανόμην, καὶ θθεν εἰη, λέγων τοῦτο μδ.

that Homer was an Egyptian, another that he was a Roman, a third that he was a Syrian—for the very pious reason, forsooth, because his heroes never eat fish, and the Syrians considered all fish sacred, as being worshippers of the fish-goddess, mentioned above (p. 40).<sup>1</sup> But with such nonsense we shall not detain our readers, and inquire rather what were the special grounds on which the seven cities based their claims, if these may yet be traced with any certainty. Now here we can happily not have the slightest difficulty in deciding in favour of the first claimant in the list, that is, Smyrna. Not that the Smyrnean aspect of the popular tradition in itself is entitled to any preference over the others; but the remarkable fact is, that of the other cities, those which advance the strongest claims, plainly admit a prior right on the part of Smyrna, by the devices, otherwise unnecessary, which they invent for bringing the mother of Homer to the banks of the Meles, or Blackwater, which flows by that city, before she gave birth to the poet. Ephorus of Cumæ, the historian, who maintained that Homer, both on the father's and the mother's side, was a Cumæan, nevertheless allowed that the mother, before giving birth to her son, was transplanted to Smyrna, and married to a citizen of that place. The local legend of Ios, preserved by Aristotle in the third book of his Treatise on the Poetic Art, and supported by Bacchylides, makes a similar admission.<sup>2</sup> According, therefore, to all rules of evidence, as understood and acted on in

λιστα παρ' ἡμῖν εἰστιν νῦν ἔγρεισθαι.  
οὐδὲ αὐτὸς μὲν ἀγνοεῖν ἐφασκεν ὡς οἱ μὲν  
Χίοι, οἱ δὲ Σμυρναῖοι, πολλοὶ δὲ Κολο-  
φώνιοι αὐτὸς νομίζουσιν. εἶναι μέντοι  
Ἐλευθερίαν, καὶ παρὰ γε τοῖς  
πολίταις, οὐχ Ὄμηρος, ἀλλὰ Τιγράνης  
καλεῖσθαις ὑστερον δὲ ὀμηρεύσας παρὰ

τοῖς Ἑλλησσι, ἀλλαδέξαι τὴν προσηγορίαν.  
Lucian, *Ver. Histor.* ii. 20.

<sup>1</sup> Welcker, *Ep. Cycl.*, vol. i. 196; Lauer, *Geschicht. Hom. Poesie*, p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> Life β in Westermann, p. 21. Bergk's *Lyrici Graeci—Bacchylid.* 59.

courts of law, the claim of Smyrna, when contravened by that of Cumæ and Ios, must be held valid. And the people of Smyrna we know were never backward to assert their superior right, but, on the contrary, put it forward confidently, with a prominence which was generally allowed by the ancient world. In their beautiful city, partly built on the height, and partly in the plain, well paved, and with regular streets, they had a Homeric library, and a Homeric portico, four-square, containing a temple of the poet, with a statue. They also showed a grotto, on the banks of the Meles, where the poet was said to have composed his verses ; and the river, gushing forth plentifully from many spring-heads, and flowing through reeds and cypress groves into the sea, with such depth of water as to be easily navigable to merchant craft of considerable tonnage, and with such smoothness that its junction could nowhere be distinctly traced, might seem an apt image of the broad and flowing stream of the poet's verse. One of their most common copper coins, also, was called a Homereum, with the head of Homer on its obverse, so that, in his everyday transactions, the poorest man in the city was reminded of his proud relation to the great minstrel of the Hellenic race.<sup>1</sup> Contrasted with this the claims of the other contending cities appear weak. The tradition of Ios, as we have seen, plainly admits the claim of Smyrna to be the place where the poet saw the light ; and there seems to be little doubt that the pretensions thus set forth by the people of this little island were founded on a very natural sort of wish, of which biographical memoirs show frequent examples, to claim the blood of that famous man, whose bones were generally allowed to have found a resting-place

<sup>1</sup> Strabo, xiv. 646 ; Pausanias vii. 5. 6 ; Himer, *Eclog.* xiii. 31, p. 233 ; Wernedorff.

in their soil, and were covered by a tomb, which a Dutch captain in the Russian service is said to have discovered in the year 1771, and which is even now shown to travellers for Homer's, just as the tomb of Virgil is at Naples.<sup>1</sup> As to the other cities in the couplet quoted, Argos, though the seat of the most ancient power of the Peloponnesus, has nothing to say for herself, any more than Egypt or Rome; for the whole body of Homeric traditions, as indeed the whole early culture of the Greeks, belongs to the coast of Asia Minor, and not to the Argolic gulf. Even more ridiculous was the claim of Athens, which in Homer's time was a state of the smallest note, and in the story of the Iliad plays a most insignificant part. But the ancients saw clearly enough through the hollowness of this claim, and showed how it arose, in the following verses about Pisistratus :—

“ Three times I rode on the Athenians' back,  
Three times expell'd, thrice I retraced my track,  
I who together bound with cunning hand  
The songs of Homer scatter'd through the land,  
For he's our golden denizen much prized,  
Since Smyrna was by Athens colonized.”<sup>2</sup>

The claims of Colophon seem to have rested on a tradition that the famous comic poem called ‘ Margites,’ about a certain Hellenic blundering Jack,

“ Who knew all things, but badly knew them all,”  
was composed by Homer in that city.<sup>3</sup> Chios stood upon

<sup>1</sup> Ross, *Griechische Inseln*, i. p. 156. Geikie's *Life of Forbes*, p. 286. Ross, who, unlike his countrymen, was a stanch believer in personal Homer, was inclined, of course, also to believe in his grave. The account which he gives of the matter is perfectly pro-

bable; but as the marbles are now lost it is impossible to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion.

<sup>2</sup> Life 8 in Westermann.

<sup>3</sup> Welcker, *Ep. Cycl.*, vol. i. p. 184; Dindorf, *Epiche Fragmente*, p. 26.

its college of minstrels,<sup>1</sup> of whom we shall have to speak afterwards, and upon the famous line of the Homeric hymn (*Apoll. Del.* 172) :—

τυφλὸς ἀνὴρ, οἰκεῖ, δὲ Χίφ, ἐνι παιπαλοέσση,

assumed to be by the bard speaking of himself; Rhodes, upon some vague notion that the epigram to Midas, quoted in the above life, was a Rhodian production;<sup>2</sup> and as to the Cyprian Salamis, the fact that the epic poem called the 'Cypria'—of which in the next chapter—was by some persons attributed to Homer, seemed a sufficient foundation on which to claim the author as a native of the island. But the ancients knew well enough the vanity of this claim also, and Alcaeus of Mitylene wrote an epigram on it, which runs thus :—

“ Not though with busts of beaten gold your fatherhood you prove,  
Making me flash like the levin-bolt in the thunder halls of Jove,  
Not I will brook a Cyprian birth : your counterfeits of me  
Greece loathes, and with averted eye disdains the cheat to see.  
Usurp some baser bard ; my name the Muses shall revere,  
My songs the brave Chioites shall sing, and every Greek shall  
hear.”<sup>3</sup>

Others amused themselves by disowning all earthly ties for the divine singer, and were contented to rest in the spiritual fatherhood of Jove and the motherhood of Calliope, as in the verses of Antipater :—

“ Homer, some say that Colophon thee bare,  
Some Chios, and some Smyrna’s city fair ;  
Some claim the blissful Salamis for thee,  
Some Thessaly beyond the sounding sea ;

<sup>1</sup> Welcker, p. 159.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 416.

<sup>3</sup> *Anthol.* vii. 5.

Some Ios' isle ; but what Apollo told  
 To me, to all I to declare am bold :  
 Heaven is thy home, and in bright halls above,  
 The Muse thy mother, and thy father Jove,"<sup>1</sup>

which smart conclusion may perhaps appear to some the best summation of the whole matter; but my faith in popular legend, and in the principles by which it ought to be interpreted, does not allow me to cast aside the superior claim of Smyrna, as it appears in the principal local legends.

We have hitherto spoken only of external evidence. But the traveller Robert Wood,<sup>2</sup> in the second half of the last century, directed special attention to the internal evidence of the author's residence afforded by the poems themselves ; and on this point also it remains to say a single word. The observation made by that sensible writer, that in Homer the strong tempestuous winds always blow between west and north from Thrace, is perfectly just ;<sup>3</sup> and if the "gentle zephyrs" of our modern poets ever do occur in the Iliad, they are certainly of the translator's manufacture, not from the original. This clearly indicates a minstrel whose habitual residence was the coast of Asia Minor, about Smyrna ; precisely where tradition places the author of the Iliad. But another argument strikes me as even stronger. The element of reality exhibited in our first chapter as so essential to all popular poetry, demands above all things that the poet choose a subject of supreme interest to his hearers ; and this he can only do by taking some tradition which is native to the soil. Now we know, and shall have to show more particularly in the next section, that the legends of the Trojan

<sup>1</sup> Life β in Westermann, p. 23.      1769 and 1775 ; German, Frankfort, 1778.

<sup>2</sup> *Essay on the Original Genius and Writings of Homer.* London, 1824.      <sup>3</sup> Iliad ix. 4. Wood, p. 23, edit.

wars brought from European Greece by the descendants of Agamemnon after the invasion of the Heraclidæ, were current chiefly in the region between Cumæ and Smyrna, the poet's best established traditional residence; and the subject of his great poem indicates the place of its author just as certainly as the poems of Walter Scott point to Tweedside as the favourite residence, and Scotland as the loved country of their author. Nor let it be said that by this argument the *Odyssey* might set up a claim for an Ithacan authorship—a crotchet, by the way, which has not wanted its learned advocacy;<sup>1</sup> for the *Odyssey* is not in any sense a great national epic like the *Iliad*, but only an epic of foreign adventure, and the romance of travel, whose hero might have his home anywhere. Besides, Ulysses, the representative of that cautious reticence and cunning which the Greeks knew well how to estimate, and by whose device in the end Troy was taken, is as much a hero of the Trojan war, and naturalized on Trojan soil, as Achilles and Hector; and in choosing him, though by birth belonging to the west of European Greece, as the hero of a grand romance of sea and land adventure, the poet was choosing a hero as familiar to his audience as any that the native Trojan soil had to offer. Add to all this that the dialect of the Hellenic tongue used by the author of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is precisely such an admixture of Ionic and Æolian Greek as a poet living in a country of mixed Æolic and Ionian population would naturally use;<sup>2</sup> and the assignment of Homer to that precise region, where he is placed

<sup>1</sup> *Ulysses-Homer: or, A Discovery of the True Author of the Iliad and Odyssey.* By Constantine Koliades. London, 1829.

<sup>2</sup> The recovery of the digamma in Homer—one of the great feats of Bent-

ley—belongs to this head. Of this old Æolic letter, Payne Knight, as is well known (1820) made a wild use; but Bekker, in his edition of 1858, has restored it to the text with great judgment and moderation.

by the popular legends, seems grounded on every proof that in the circumstances could be reasonably required.

One only point remains—the most difficult, but happily the least important on this head—the date of Homer. Herodotus, as is well known, states that the poet lived about four hundred years before his own time;<sup>1</sup> that is, in round numbers, about 850 B.C. But the most learned of the Greeks had no perfectly uniform story to tell on this matter, any more than on the Trojan war. They assigned various dates to Homer, between the earliest and the latest of which the interval is so great that at first sight one would think not even a probable approximation to the truth were possible. But there were crotchety persons in ancient times as well as now ; and peculiar extreme views on any subject, even when propounded by men of acknowledged talent and learning, unless supported by strong evidence and cogent argument, are always to be regarded with suspicion. When, therefore, we read that Crates of Mallus, the celebrated founder of the Pergamene school of criticism, who flourished about the middle of the second century before Christ, and who was unquestionably a great Homeric scholar, threw back the date of the poet to the very era of the Trojan war,<sup>2</sup> and that Theopompus, the historian of Philip of Macedon, who wrote towards the end of the fourth century before Christ, placed an interval of five hundred years between the poet and that event, bringing the old minstrel in this way down into the clear day of chronological history, and making him contemporary with Archilochus,<sup>3</sup> we shall not feel inclined to give any weight to such statements ; for of these two extreme

<sup>1</sup> See the passage quoted, page 14 | τὸν εἰς τοὺς Τρωικοὺς χρόνους.—Proclus. above. | περὶ Ομήρου.—Westermann.

<sup>2</sup> Οἱ δὲ περὶ Κράτηρα διδύοντος αὐτοῦ | <sup>3</sup> Clem. Stromata, 1. 389 ; (Potter.) Euseb. *Præpar. Evang.* x. 11.

dates, the one is contrary to the well-known fact in literary history, that the popular epic, growing, as it does, by an accumulation of local traditions, requires time for its development, while the other confutes itself, by assigning a date for the poet so recent, that if it had been the real one, there never could have been any dispute about the matter. To bring Homer down into the era of the Olympiads is just as absurd as to transport Cadmus into the midst of the Trojan war, or, to use a topographical illustration, to bring the grey cone of Ben Ledi down to Stirling Castle, or the peaks of the Alps down to the plain of Piedmont. With the exception of these two extreme points, the apparent varieties of the other assigned dates, as Clinton justly observes, will be found on examination to be greater than the real.<sup>1</sup> We shall, however, wisely content ourselves with remarking, that the date of Herodotus, with a free margin of some half a century, seems on the whole that date which agrees best both with the great majority of the authorities and with the nature of the case. The Roman writers place the poet about a century and a half before the foundation of Rome;<sup>2</sup> and if we take our previous high road of the register of the Spartan kings, by the help of which we got the year 1100 B.C. for the Trojan war, and allow after this, according to the general tradition of the Greeks, some fifty or sixty years at least for the Æolic and Ionic migrations, with which the legends of the old Greek families came into Asia Minor; and further, add to this another half century to give the colonies time to settle, and to obtain that measure of outward prosperity which is neces-

<sup>1</sup> Clinton, vol. i. p. 147.

<sup>2</sup> Nepos apud Gellium, xvii. 21. Velleius Paterculus, who wrote his history in the year 30 of our era, says, "ferme ante annos DCXXII. floruit" (Hist. 1. 5), and then he very justly quotes the well-known *ολαντην βροτοι εισι* as a proof that the poet did not consider that he was talking of his contemporaries.

sary for the growth of the highest poetry, we shall have reached the year 900, when the wicked Ahab and the Phœnician Jezebel were misruling Israel, which tallies with the date of Herodotus, if we take it for the period of the poet's full and perfect manhood, and the zenith of his poetic powers. But of this enough. The most ancient Greek chronology is a matter about which no wise man will care to be curious. It is neither possible nor needful to know all things with the same degree of accuracy.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For the materials belonging to this chapter I am principally indebted to Welcker's *Epic Cycle*, Lauer's book above quoted, and Clinton. Of course, at the present day, there was not much to be got from Blackwell's *Inquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer*, London, 1736, though Gladstone certainly does not tell the whole truth about it when he says (i. 5), "No reader of Homer, in our time, would really, I apprehend, be the poorer if every copy of this book of Blackwell could be burned." So far as this sentence is true, it is true of a thousand very good, and in some respects very instructive books, which the progress of literary or scientific research has superseded. More just unquestionably is the short dictum of Heyne, with regard to the Scotch scholar: "*Blackwelli liber in quo primas lineas melioris doctrinas ductas facile agnoscas*!"—(Pref. II. xvi.) The book must be judged by the age in which the author lived, and the contributions which he made to the branch of learning on which he wrote. With a very considerable amount of reading and scholarly culture, Blackwell was no doubt destitute of that critical discrimination in the use of authorities, without which no trustworthy results in classical research are

obtainable. He is, besides, smitten to an extreme degree with that transcendental admiration for Egypt, which, from the days of Herodotus downwards, has played so many strange pranks in the field of Hellenic research. Nevertheless the book is not without permanent value in some respects, especially on account of the prominence which the author gives to Homer's character as a minstrel, not a literary poet, and the influence of this great fundamental fact on the character and style of the Homeric poems. On this point I consider, as will appear presently, that the learned Aberdeen Principal has anticipated some of the most important results of Wolf's criticism; results not even now properly appreciated by Gladstone, Mure, Arnold, and the British school generally. The book was translated into German by T. H. Voss in 1776, which surely implies some merit. On this book Bentley is reported to have said that when he had gone through half of it he had forgotten the beginning, and when he had finished the reading of it he had forgotten the whole. This is likely enough to have been true; but Monck (*Life of Bentley*, p. 622) does not consider the anecdote sufficiently vouched.

## DISSERTATION IV.

### ON THE EPIC MATERIALS OF HOMER—THE EPIC CYCLE.

THE preceding discussions have endeavoured to establish the reality of the Iliad as based on a historical fact, and the reality of its author as a historical personage. They have looked on the work as a book rather than as a poem, and its author as a man more than as a poet. We must now advance a step, and inquire into the action of the poet's mind as a builder of an imaginative structure from historical materials, where these materials come directly under those laws of ideal harmony which subordinate the actual to the beautiful and the sublime. And here the first question is, What were the epic materials that lay before Homer when he conceived the idea of his great work, and by what preference was he guided in the selection of his particular theme? Such a question, with regard to any famous work of poetic art, may not always be capable of a complete answer; but it is a question which the thoughtful student will always be inclined to put, and to which he will feel that a well-instructed expositor ought to be able to give an answer in so far satisfactory. Of course the particular genius of the poet will be an important element in such an inquiry; and in the biographies of modern poets of strongly-marked individuality, the working of this element will often appear in very interesting aspects,

and under very instructive circumstances; but in the case of Homer the personal peculiarities of the poet are so unknown that we have no means of bringing into view any special influence which his genius may have exercised on the choice of his subject. We must therefore be content to know the man altogether from his works, and cannot, of course, employ an unknown element to explain the production of what, so far as our discussion has advanced, does not yet exist. Besides, in a future chapter we shall have cause to see that the genius of Homer and the genius of the Greek people are absolutely identical, so that any such personal inquiries as might reasonably occupy the critical historian of a Byron, a Wordsworth, a Shelley, a Coleridge, or a Browning, in the case of Homer cannot be started. What remains, therefore, for us to consider, is the mass of poetic material which lay before Homer, and the choice which he made of it; exactly as if, in the case of Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King,' an ardent student, wishing to explain their genesis, and to set forth their excellences, should set himself to review all the French, English, and Welsh collections of Arthurian romance with which our libraries are stored; or, if Milton's 'Paradise Lost' were the object of his critical study, in this case, over and above the particular bent of the poet's genius, he should inquire into these five things, both as composing the atmosphere which Milton breathed, and as affording a rich store of materials which he might employ—viz. (1.) Christianity; (2.) England; (3.) the Reformation and the Puritan theology; (4.) the Christian Scriptures, with the Talmudic traditions; (5.) the revival of letters, and classical learning. Without an accurate consideration of these five elements, it is impossible that any man should form a just estimate either of the character of the architecture of the

great English epic, or of the merit of the architect. Now with regard to Homer, we are not in a condition to present in anywise such a satisfactory inventory either of the materials which he used as a poet, or of the manner in which he used them; and this for the obvious reason that the author of the Iliad stands first and alone, as the expositor of the age in which he lived; and we cannot confront any part of his work with the separate material out of which it arose. But there do exist, nevertheless, certain epic materials from ancient Greece, which stand in the same relation to Homer that the works of the other Elizabethan dramatists do to those of Shakspeare; and in these partly we see expanded before us no small amount of epic material which in Homer is only indicated or supposed, and partly, an equally large amount of material foreign to both Iliad and Odyssey, but which the framer of these poems had before him to use or not to use, as his poetic judgment might direct. The presentation of these materials brings us into the very workshop of Homer's minstrelsy, which otherwise must remain an isolated wonder and unexplained mystery, just as the New Testament, so far as its historical appearance is concerned, would remain inexplicable without the Old. But even if the Old were clean blotted out, it is so constantly presupposed in the New, and so inwoven into the toughest tissue of its record, that not only could its existence be proved from the New, but some of the great distinctive lines of its character could be revived. So it is exactly with regard to Homer. We have not only in a separate form the stores of epic material which he used, but we have embodied in the Homeric poems themselves a habitual reference to these stores, with such frequency, and in such a style of familiar allusion, as can leave not the slightest

doubt as to their existence. It is, in fact, the constant and characteristic style of Homer to allude to previously existing epic material, just as our preachers in their sermons do to the familiar biography and history of the Old Testament. The rape of Helen, for instance, and the judgment of Paris, are only indicated in the very slightest way in the Iliad; but how rich a treasure of epic material lay in this legend is evident, both from its frequent exhibition in works of ancient art,<sup>1</sup> and from the lost epic of the Cypria, of which we shall presently speak. Again, in the remarkable speech of Jove, at the opening of the Odyssey, the whole tragedy of Agamemnon and Orestes, afterwards developed by Æschylus into a grand dramatic trilogy, is suggested in a few lines:—

"Ω πότοι, οδον δή νν θεοὺς βροτοὶ αἰτώντας.  
 ἔξ ήμέων γάρ φασι κάκ' ἐμμεναι· οἱ δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ<sup>2</sup>  
 σφῆσιν ἀτασθαλίησιν ὑπέρμορον ἄλγε' ἔχουσιν.  
 ὡς καὶ νῦν Αἰγισθος ὑπέρμορον Ἀτρεΐδαο  
 γῆμ' ἄλοχον μνηστήν, τὸν δ' ἔκτανε νοστήσαντα,  
 εἰδὼς αἰτὺν ὀλεθρον ἐπεὶ πρό οἱ εἴπομεν ήμεῖς,  
 'Ερμείαν πέμψαντες, ἐνσκοπὸν 'Αργειφόντην,  
 μήτ' αὐτὸν κτείνειν, μήτε μνάσθαι ἀκοιτιν'  
 ἐκ γὰρ Ὁρέσταο τίσις ἔστεται Ἀτρεΐδαο,  
 ὀππότ' ἀν ήβήσῃ τε καὶ ης ἴμειρεται αῖης.  
 ὡς ἔφαθ' 'Ερμείας· ἀλλ' οὐ φρένας Αἰγισθοῖο  
 πείθ' ἀγαθὰ φρονέων νῦν δ' ἀθρόα πάντ' ἀπέτισεν."

In the same way, the fourth book of the Odyssey contains a sketch of the adventures of some of the Greek leaders in

<sup>1</sup> Overbeck, *Die Bildwerke zum Thebischen und Troischen Heldenkreis*. Stuttgart, 1857; p. 170.

<sup>2</sup> "Alas! how prone are human-kind to blame  
 The Powers of Heaven! From us, they say, proceed  
 The ills which they endure, yet more than Fate  
 Herself inflicts, by their own crimes incur.  
 So now Ægisthus, by no force constrain'd  
 Of Destiny, Atrides' wedded wife

their return from Troy, which we know formed the subject of a separate epic called the *Nóstos*, or “the returns.” The *Nekvíá*, or “visit to Hades,” in the eleventh book of the same poem, contains a rich phantasmagoric exhibition of mythological and historical personages, many of them not otherwise named in Homer, who play a prominent part in the future lyrical and dramatic poetry of Greece. Phemius also, and Demodocus—the two professional minstrels who appear in different parts of the *Odyssey*—are introduced in such a way as to make no secret of the various wealth of heroic and theological tale which they kept in store. Phemius, in the first book, whom necessity, not choice, had made the poet of the insolent Ithacan suitors, commences singing the sad return of the Greeks from Troy—

ο δ' Ἀχαιῶν νόστον ἀειδεν  
λυγρὸν, ὃν ἐκ Τροίης ἐπετείλατο Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη.

Upon which the prudent Penelope appears above, looking out from her upper chamber, with her two attendant maids, and beseeches the bard to choose another theme, of which he had ample store, as that which he had now chosen was too painful to her feelings—

πολλὰ γὰρ ἀλλα βροτῶν θελκτήρια οἴδας  
ἔργ' ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε, τατέ κλείοντιν ἀοιδοῖ.

On this Telemachus interferes, telling his mother to keep her

Took to himself, and him at his return  
Slew, not unwarn'd of his own dreadful end  
By us; for we commanded Hermes down  
The watchful Argicide, who bade him fear  
Alike, to slay the King, or woo the Queen:  
For that Atrides' son Orestes, soon  
As grown mature, and eager to assume  
His sway imperial, should avenge the deed.  
So Hermes spake, but his advice moved not  
Agisthus, on whose head the whole arrear  
Of vengeance heap'd, at last, hath therefore fallen.” — COWPER.

feelings and herself quietly in her own apartments, for women have nothing to do with the court-yard and the public streets ; and men will have the newest ballad of the day whether it be pleasing to female ears or not —

*τὴν γὰρ δοιδὴν μᾶλλον ἐπικλείνοσ' ἄνθρωποι  
ἥτις ἀκούοντεσσιν νεωτάτη ἀμφιπέληται.<sup>1</sup>*

Nor is the Phaeacian bard, in the eighth book, less rich in his resources, or less ready to sing either of the loves of the gods or of the wars of men as his hearers may desire.<sup>2</sup> We see, therefore, in what a rich atmosphere of epic material Homer moved. He has opened the chambers of his own honey-hive without meaning to do so ; and we know from what materials he built up his rhyme as certainly as we know that Edinburgh was built from the sandstone of Craigleith, and London from the bricks of the London clay.<sup>3</sup> We see also how unwisely the critics of the last century talked when they found no words by which to express the superiority of Homer to all other poets in point of invention. Neither they nor we have the materials in our hands which might enable us to say how much Homer received from the pre-existing popular minstrels, and how much he added from his own genius. We can confront Goethe's 'Faust' with the popular chap-book of the same name, and Shakspeare's 'Antony and Cleopatra' with Plutarch's life of Antony ; but, with regard to Homer, we can only say that the materials which lay before him to be used were remarkably rich, and that his position as an itinerant popular minstrel naturally led to his using them more largely and closely than a poet,

<sup>1</sup> *Odyssey* i. 325 355.

<sup>2</sup> *Odyssey* viii. 265 and 487.

<sup>3</sup> A very complete list of the most ancient Greek ballads, which may be

looked on as Homeric material, will be found in the excellent posthumous work of G. W. Nitzsch, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Eposchen Poesie der Griechen* (1862), p. 147.

in the modern sense, writing as a literary man to literary readers, would have done. In this matter Scaliger, perverse and prejudiced as he generally was, saw the truth : “ *Quæ enim vel in Iliade vel in Ulyssea fabulæ narrantur, cave putas ab ipso excogitatas, sed per ora vulgi sâne multo antea circum-latas.* ”<sup>1</sup> And we learn further that the Iliad and Odyssey, with all their grandeur, are only two great fragments—say, if you please, the only striking and effective fragments—but still only fragments of an immense floating collection of poetic materials existing in early Greece, and generally known and appreciated for centuries before Homer appeared. These materials, worked into a poetical shape, partly by Homer himself, partly by his immediate successors, and forming when put together a complete circle or continuous sequence of epic tradition, were called by the Alexandrian grammarians of a later age, the EPIC CYCLE ; and this is a segment of Greek literary history which, in however meagre an outline it now remains, the expositor of Homer is not, at the present hour, entitled to ignore. I shall therefore, in the few pages of this section which follow, endeavour to give some account of this matter, with a certain detail, but at the same time with all possible conciseness.

The general classical scholar naturally draws his impression of cyclic poems and cyclic poets from the well-known passage of Horace in his book of the Poetic Art, which, as it contains two perfectly just critical remarks on the epic art of Homer, may stand here at length—

“ Nec sic incipies, ut scriptor cyclius olim :  
 ‘ Fortunam Priami cantabo, et nobile bellum.’  
 Quid dignum tanto feret hic promissor hiatu ?  
 Parturiunt montes ; nascetur ridiculus mus.

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* v. 2.

Quanto rectius hic, qui nil molitur ineptè ?  
 ' Dic mihi, Musa, virum, captæ post tempora Trojæ,  
 Qui mores hominum multorum vedit et urbes.'  
 Non fumum ex fulgore, sed ex fumo dare lucem,  
 Cogitat, ut speciosa dehinc miracula promat,  
 Antiphaten, Scyllamque, et cum Cyclope Charybdi.  
 Nec redditum Diomedis ab interitu Meleagri,  
 Nec gemino bellum Trojanum orditur ab ovo.  
 Semper ad eventum festinat ; et in medias res,  
 Non secùs ac notas, auditorem rapit ; et, quæ  
 Desperat tractata nitescere posse, relinquit :  
 Atque ita mentitur, sic veris falsa remiscet,  
 Primo ne medium, medio ne discrepet imum."<sup>1</sup>

The impression which this passage produces as a whole, if we refer both parts of it, as the reader naturally does, to the "cyclic writer" in the first line, is that the cyclic poets were a set of inferior versemongers, who did not know the difference between a chronicle and a drama, and who sought to compensate for the poverty of their invention by the pompousness of their professions. But accurate philologers, who looked more nicely into this matter, soon perceived that the impression taken up from these random remarks of Horace was far from affording a key to all the passages of the ancient writers in which cyclic poems are mentioned ; and Buttmann, with the honesty native to a thorough thinker, not much more than forty years ago confessed—" *Scio tam obscuram esse illam de cyclo materiam, ut meris conjecturis non solum quod affirmes, sed etiam quod neges nitatur.*"<sup>2</sup> There is some obscurity hanging about this matter still ; and where large conclusions are to be deduced from mere scraps and fragments of evidence, it is a hasty weakness of human nature, and more particularly of German academical nature,

<sup>1</sup> *Ars Poetica*, 136-152.

<sup>2</sup> *Scholia in Odysseam* (Berlin, 1821), p. 575.

against which one must constantly be on his guard, to build with much erudite pains a beautiful structure, appearing to rest on a solid foundation, which a single breath can annihilate. But with regard to the broad outline of this matter, if it is now as clear as any other point of Greek literary history, to those who have eyes that see in such regions, we owe it to the 'epischer Kyklus' of Professor Welcker, a work combining in a remarkable degree the minute microscopic research common to all the German scholars, with the fine taste, sound judgment, and healthy human feeling that belong to the few.<sup>1</sup> In this valuable work the Homeric student may see in detail all that can be said about cyclic poets and cyclic poems, with our existing means. For our present purpose it will be sufficient to quote one or two of the most significant passages on the cyclic poems from the ancient classics, to translate the short arguments of their contents given by the grammarian Proclus, and prefixed to the Venetian Scholia,<sup>2</sup> and then to make a few remarks on the literary value of the cycle, and especially in its bearing on the great work of Homer.

The first reference to the cyclic poets which I shall mention is that well-known one from Clement of Alexandria, about the comparative antiquity of Greek and Hebrew literature, in the first book of the 'Stromata.'<sup>3</sup> Here that learned Father, after enumerating a long list of the most ancient Greek poets, from Orpheus downwards, in which the names of Arctinus, Lesches, and Eumelus appear, three poets of the

<sup>1</sup> The merits of Welcker's book have been fully acknowledged in his own country. Lauer, whose own work also is a model, calls it "the best book on Homer that we possess" (p. 84); and Nitzsch, in his *Gesch. der Episch. Poesie*, p. 217, acknowledges the great

service which the Bonn professor has done, by filling up in some degree the literary void in the midst of which Homer previously stood.

<sup>2</sup> *Scholia in Homeri Iliadem*. Bekker. Berlin, 1825.

<sup>3</sup> Potter, 397-8.

cycle, says that the reason why he had specified these names was because ἐν τοῖς πάνυ παλαιοῖς τοῖς τοῦ κύκλου ποιητὰς τιθέασιν—"the poets of the cycle were placed among the very ancient." The same writer, in his hortatory discourse to the Greeks,<sup>1</sup> mentions Κυπρίακα ποιήματα, certain Cyprian poems, on which passage the scholiast has this important note:—

"Cyprian poems are those which belong to the cycle. They contain the rape of Helen; but the author of them is uncertain; for he is one of the cyclic poets; and those poets are called cyclic who narrate in a cycle the story of the Iliad, and the events which preceded and followed it, from true Homeric sources."

Then we have a remarkable passage from Athenaeus,<sup>2</sup> which runs as follows:—

"Sophocles in his Ajax having used the word ἐλλοῦς for *fishes*, some one asked if any writer had used that word before him. To whom Zoilus replied, Though I am no epicure, and not curious about fish, yet I know well that he who wrote the poem of the battle of the Titans—whether it were Eumelus the Corinthian, or Arctinus—in the second book of that work thus writes:—

'Ἐν δ' αὐτῇ πλωτοὶ χρυσώπιδες ἐχθίες ἐλλοὶ<sup>3</sup>  
Νήχοντες παιζοντι δι' ὑδατος ἀμβροσίοιο.'

And as for Sophocles, he delighted much in the epic cycle, and composed whole dramas, following exactly the heroic legends as they are found there."

Then there is the passage from the Chrestomathy of Proclus the grammarian, which had long been well known, from the prominent position which it occupies in the library of Photius,<sup>3</sup> and runs thus:—

"He discusseth what is called the epic cycle, and says that it commences with the marriage of Heaven and Earth, and goes through

<sup>1</sup> Potter, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> vii. 277, D.

<sup>3</sup> Photius, *Biblioth. σλθ'*, p. 521, Hoeschel.

the history of the gods and heroes, till it comes to the arrival of Ulysses in Ithaca, and the death of that hero unwittingly by his son Telegonus. And he says that the cyclic poems are still preserved, and that they are read by many, not so much because of their excellence, as on account of the sequence of mythological and heroic story which they contain. And he mentions the names of those who wrote these cyclic poems, and the places of their birth. He also makes mention of certain Cyprian poems, which some refer to Stasinus a Cyprian, some to Hegesias of Salamis, and some to Homer himself, who gave them to Stasinus as a dowry when he married his daughter."

From these passages, without treading on debatable ground, the following conclusions may be drawn with perfect safety :—(1.) The poems of the epic cycle were amongst the oldest poems in their language known to the Greeks, (2.) so old indeed that their authorship was often unknown, and they were sometimes attributed vaguely to Homer; (3.) That they were epic poems belonging to the same genus as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and embracing those regions of ancient legendary story which the great poet had left unoccupied; (4.) That they were much read by the Greeks, and were used by the later poets in common with Homer as a great quarry of dramatic materials. And these conclusions harmonize completely with the contents of the best known of these poems, as we get their general outline from the abstracts or arguments of Proclus, which we here translate :<sup>1</sup>—

"After this he giveth the poem called the *Cypria*, in eleven books, of which the contents are as follows : Jove consults with Themis about the Trojan war, whereupon Strife, when the gods are hon-

<sup>1</sup> The abstract of the *Cypria* will be found at the end of Welcker's second volume, and in Dünzter's very useful collection, *Die Fragmente der Epischen Poesie* (Köln, 1840); also in Henrichsen, *De Carninibus Cyprius* (Havnie, 1828). The rest is from the Venetian Scholia.

uring the marriage of Peleus and Thetis with their presence, stirs up a contest between Pallas, Aphrodite, and Hera about their respective claims to beauty, to settle which Jove orders that they all be conducted to Mount Ida, and submit to the arbitration of Alexander ; and they are accordingly conducted thither by Hermes. Alexander, bribed by the promise of the beautiful Helen, awards the prize to Aphrodite, and forthwith, under the direction of the goddess, prepares a ship for the voyage to Lacedæmon, in which expedition Aphrodite advises *Æneas* to accompany him, and prophetic utterances with regard to the voyage and its results are made by Helenus and Cassandra. Then Alexander sets sail, and arriving at Lacedæmon, is entertained first by the Tyndaridæ, and afterwards by Menelaus at Sparta, and during the hospitable banquet makes costly presents to his beautiful hostess. Thereafter Menelaus departs for Crete, leaving his commands with Helen to perform all kindly offices to the strangers, so long as they should choose to sojourn. But now Aphrodite brings Helen and Alexander together ; and soon afterwards they depart during the night, having first put their most valuable possessions on board. During the voyage Hera raises a storm, which drives Alexander to Sidon, which city he takes, and thereafter sails for Troy, where he celebrates his marriage with Helen. Meanwhile, in Sparta, Castor and Pollux are caught carrying off the cattle of Idas and Lynceus ; on this a scuffle ensues, in which Castor is slain by Idas ; both he and Lynceus are killed by Pollux, and Jove confers on the two brothers the gift of an alternate immortality. After this Iris brings word to Menelaus of the outrage which had been committed on his family, and he forthwith returning to Sparta, holds counsel with his brother, and goes to Nestor for further advice. The Pylian sage, in the course of the colloquy, enters into a digression, in which he narrates the story of Epopeus, how he brought ruin on himself by deflowering the daughter of Lycurgus ; as also the story of Oedipus, and the madness of Hercules, and the tale of Thescus and Ariadne. Then, the expedition being ready, they set sail for Asia, and landing first at Teuthrania, lay it waste, mistaking that country for the Troad, the chief seat of Priam's power. Here Telephus, fighting in defence of the Teuthranians, kills Thessander,

the son of Polynices, and is himself wounded by Achilles. The fleet now sets sail from Mysia, but being overtaken by a storm, the ships are scattered, and Achilles being driven ashore at the isle of Scyros, is entertained there, and marries Deidamia, the daughter of the king. Thereafter Telephus, having come to Troy in obedience to an oracle, is cured of his wound by Achilles, and consents to act as a guide to the Greeks in following out the expedition. The fleet is then equipped a second time, and while it is about to sail from the harbour of Aulis, Agamemnon having killed a stag when out hunting in the neighbourhood, boasted that his skill was such that he could excel even Artemis in the chase ; at which vain-glorious humour the goddess being incensed, kept him wind-bound in the channel. On this Calchas is consulted, who declares the cause of the wrath of the goddess, and says that she can be appeased only by the death of the king's daughter Iphigenia, who is accordingly sent for, and, under the pretence of being married to Achilles, is brought to the place of sacrifice ; but the goddess substitutes a stag for the royal damsel, and transports her to the Taurian Chersonesus and makes her immortal. Instantly the wind changes and the expedition sets sail, and in a few days lands at Tenedos ; but on the way, as they halt at Lemnos to take food, Philoctetes being bitten by a snake, and an intolerable stench proceeding from the venomous sore, is left behind. Afterwards a strife ensues between Agamemnon and Achilles. The army then lands on the Trojan shore ; the Trojans manfully resist the landing, and Protesilaos is slain by Hector ; but at the last Achilles drives the Trojans back, slaying Cycnus the son of Poseidon. The dead are then buried ; and an embassy is sent to Priam demanding the restitution of Helen and her property. The Trojans refuse, and the Achæans lay siege to the city.

“ Thereafter they make excursions into the country, and sack the cities in the neighbourhood ; and after this Achilles, being desirous of seeing Helen, has an interview with her by favour of Themis and Aphrodite. Soon after, the Greeks wavering and wishing to give up the expedition, Achilles keeps them back ; and then he makes booty of the oxen of Æneas, and sacks Lyrnessus and Pedasus, and many

other towns of the neighbourhood, besides slaying Truillus, while Patroclus takes Lycaon captive and sells him as a slave to the isle of Lemnos. Himself from the booty receives Briscia, and Agamemnon, Chryseia. The poem then concludes with the death of Palamedes, and the declaration of the counsel of Jove, to assist the Trojans, by withdrawing Achilles for a season from the Greek alliance; to which is added a muster of the Trojan forces that now stand opposed to the Grecians. Then follows the Iliad of Homer; after which the Ethiopiad of the Milesian Arctinus, in five books, of which the contents are as follows: The Amazon Penthesilea, the daughter of Mars, and by birth a Thracian, comes to the assistance of the Trojans. She displays great prowess, but is slain by Achilles, and buried by the Trojans. Thersites insults Achilles, and reproaches him with undue tenderness shown to Penthesilea, whereupon the slanderer is slain, and a commotion arises in the Greek camp. Achilles after this sails to Lesbos, and, having sacrificed to Apollo, and Artemia, and Latona, is purified from the murder by Ulysses. Then Memnon, the son of Aurora, clad in a panoply made by Vulcan, comes to assist the Trojans, and Thetis explains to her son the circumstances connected with this hero. The battle commences, and Antilochus is slain by Memnon, who is himself soon after slain by Achilles. Aurora obtains from Jove immortality for her son. The Trojans are routed by Achilles, who, rushing into the city, is slain by Paris and Apollo. A severe fight ensues to recover the dead body of the fallen hero, which Ajax carries off triumphantly to the ships, while Ulysses keeps the Trojans at bay. Then the funeral of Antilochus follows, and the dead body of Achilles is laid out, and Thetis, arriving in company with her sister and the Muses, bewails her son. After this Thetis carries off the body from the pyre to the Island Leuce, or white island, while the Achæans raise a mound in his honour, and proclaim public games. Then Ulysses and Ajax strive for the possession of the arms of Achilles.

Next follows the little Iliad, in four books, by Lesches of Mitylene, of which the contents are as follows: The judgment in the strife about the arms of Achilles is given, and they are awarded to Ulysses by the doom of Minerva; whereupon Ajax becomes mad,

breaks in upon the body of the Achæans, and kills himself. After this, Ulysses, lying in wait, takes Helenus ; and in obedience to the prophetic directions of the seer, Diomed brings back Philoctetes from Lemnos, as Troy could not be taken without him. He is healed of his ulcer by Machaon, and fighting in single combat, slays Paris, whose body, rudely handled by Menelaus, is recovered by the Trojans, and receives funeral rites. On this Deiphobus marries Helen, and Ulysses bringing Neoptolemus from Scyrus, gives him his father's arms, and the shade of Achilles appears to his son. Then Eurypylus, the son of Telephus, arrives to assist the Trojans, and distinguishes himself in battle, but is slain by Neoptolemus. The siege of Troy is pressed, and Epeus, on the counsel of Minerva, constructs the wooden horse. Thereafter Ulysses, having voluntarily wounded himself, comes as a spy into Troy, and being recognised by Helen, makes an agreement with her about the surrender of the city ; and after slaying some Trojans, returns to the ships. After this, in conjunction with Diomed, he carries off the Palladium from Troy. Then the bravest of the Greeks enter into the wooden horse, while the mass of the army burn their tents and sail to Tenedos. Immediately the Trojans, imagining themselves at length freed from the evils of the siege, break down a part of the wall, receive the wooden horse into the city, and indulge in public rejoicing, as having conquered the Greeks.

“ On these two poems follows ‘the Capture of Troy,’ in four books, by Arctinus of Miletus, of which the contents are as follows : The Trojans are represented as standing in crowds round the wooden horse, deliberating what they ought to do with it, some saying it ought to be hurled down the steep rock, others that it ought to be burnt, others that it should be consecrated to Minerva, and the opinion of these last prevails. Then they give themselves over to feasting as being delivered from the war. Meanwhile two enormous serpents suddenly appear and devour Laocoon and one of his sons. Troubled at this portent, *Æneas* and his comrades retire to Ida, and Sinon, who had previously entered the city, raises the fire-signals to the Greeks. Then the Greek army sails back from Tenedos ; those within the horse leap out on the foe, slay many, and

take the city by storm. Neoptolemus kills Priam, who had fled for refuge to the altar of the family Jove, and Menelaus finding Helen, takes her to the ships, after killing Deiphobus. The Oilean Ajax violently carries off Cassandra, and along with her the sacred image of Minerva ; at which sacrilegious deed the Greeks in anger order him to be stoned ; but he, taking refuge at the altar of Minerva, is saved. Then the Greeks sail away, and Minerva prepares destruction for them on their voyage home. Ulysses having slain Astyanax, Neoptolemus receives Andromache as his prize, and the other spoils are divided. Demophoon and Acamas having found Æthra, carry her off. Then, setting the city on fire, they sacrifice Polyxena upon the tomb of Achilles.

“ Then follows ‘the Returns,’ in five books, by Agias of Trœzene, of which the contents are as follows : Minerva raises a strife between Agamemnon and Menelaus about the voyage homeward. Agamemnon remains with the intention of propitiating the wrath of the goddess, while Diomed and Nestor depart, and arrive safely in their own country. After these Menelaus sets out, and lands in Egypt with only five ships, all the others having been lost on the voyage. Calchas, Leontes, and Polypœtes march on foot to Colophon, and, arriving there, bury Tiresias, who had died in that place. While Agamemnon and his party are about to sail, the shade of Achilles appears, and endeavours to dissuade them from the enterprise, predicting the misfortunes that would take place. Then an account is given of the storm at the Capharean rocks, and the unhappy end of Ajax the Locrian is described. Meanwhile Neoptolemus, by the advice of Thetis, makes the journey by land, and, arriving in Thrace, overtakes Ulysses at Maronea, and then completes the remainder of the journey. Arrived in Thessaly, he buries Phoenix, and then departs for the country of the Molossians, where he makes himself known to Peleus. . . . The poem ends with the revenge which Orestes and Pylades take for the murder of Agamemnon by Ægisthus and Clytemnestra, and the return of Menelaus to his own country.

“ Next in order comes the Odyssey of Homer. Then the Telegoniad, in two books, by Euganumon of Cyrene, of which the contents are as follows : The suitors are buried by their relations ; and

Ulysses, having sacrificed to the Nymphs, sails to Elis, and is entertained by Polyxenos, and receives in gift a bowl with the history of Trophonius, Agamedes, and Augeas embossed on it. Then he marries Callidice, the queen of the Thesprotians. Thereafter a war arises between this people, commanded by Ulysses, and the Brygians. In this war Mars puts to flight the companions of Ulysses, but the hero himself is assisted by Minerva.

"After the death of Callidice, Polypœtus, the son of Ulysses, succeeds to the kingdom, while he himself returns to Ithaca. Meanwhile Telegonus, having gone to seek his father, lands at Ithaca, and lays waste the island, and Ulysses, fighting in defence of his country, is slain by his own son in ignorance. Then Telegonus, on discovering his crime, carries his father's body along with Telemachus and Penelope to his own mother, who makes them immortal ; and Telegonus lives with Penelope, and Telemachus with Circe."

These extracts, along with the few meagre fragments that are found in Duntzer's collection, contain substantially all that we know about the contents of the cyclic poems ; and the ingenious sedulity which has impelled Nitzsch, Welcker, and other German scholars, with a partial and slippery success, to reconstruct the lost organisms in their totality, will excite the admiration of some British students, the ridicule of others, and the imitation of none. Questions have also been raised and investigations made as to the exact poems that were actually included in the cycle ; and in this region the native Scottish caution of Mure has declined to follow the minute daring of the Germans.<sup>1</sup> We can only say with certainty that the most important poems in the collection were those which were either introductory or supplementary to the two great stories of the Iliad and the Odyssey ; and that next to these the stories of the Theban war and the adventures of Hercules afforded the most abundant material

<sup>1</sup> Mure, *Literary History of Greece*, vol. ii. p. 258.

for the epic poetry of early Greece. The Theban war is mentioned by Pausanias as by far the most notable contest that Greeks carried on against Greeks in the heroic age;<sup>1</sup> and the poem of the cycle, which treated of this war, is praised as the best of the old epic poetry after Homer; it is also mentioned by Lucretius, along with the Trojan war, as amongst the most ancient facts of which there is any memory:—

“ *Præterea si nulla fuit genitalis origo  
Terrarum et cœli, semperque æterna fuere,  
Cur supra bellum Thebanum et funera Trojæ,  
Non alias alii quoque res cecinere poetæ.*”<sup>2</sup>

Propertius, also, while disclaiming for his own erotic muse any sympathy with such lofty themes, seems to include the whole domain of the early epic cycle, along with the extension which it afterwards received:—

“ *Non ego Titanes canerem, non Ossam Olympo  
Impositum, ut cœlo Pelion esset iter,  
Non veteres Thebas, nec Pergama nomen Homeri,  
Xerxis et imperio bina coisse vada.*”

Here we have the three phases which Greek epic poetry was destined to traverse distinctly indicated,—the theological, of which Hesiod is now our only type, the heroic, represented by Homer, and the historical by Chœrilus of Samos, who, about the time of the Peloponnesian war, wrote a poem on the expedition of Xerxes in hexameter verse. On the exploits of Hercules, the most famous of the ancient epic poems was called the ‘Capture of Oichalia,’—*Oἰχαλίας ἀλωσις*,—which Suidas attributes to Homer, and which has a peculiar inter-

<sup>1</sup> ix. 9. 2. Compare *Schol. Soph.*, O. C. 1370.

<sup>2</sup> Lib. v. 324.

est attaching to it from an old Samian tradition connected with the immediate successors of Homer, which Strabo mentions in his account of that island. A native of Samos, says the geographer, was Creophylus, who, they say, once hospitably entertained Homer, and received as a reward for his kindness from the grateful bard the poem called *Oīχαλίας ἀλωσίς*, with the right to use it as his own. And then he goes on to quote an epigram of Callimachus, in which he makes the book speak, claiming its real authorship for Creophylus,<sup>1</sup> but yielding not unwillingly to the usurpation of a more honourable name, thus :--

"A Samian made me once a minstrel brave,  
Who to old Homer entertainment gave ;  
The woes of Eurytus, Oichalia's king,  
And Iole, maiden yellow-hair'd, I sing ;  
Now critics find in me Homeric fire,  
Though well I know Creophylus was my sire.  
So be it ! while they filch my master's fame,  
They praise his work, link'd to great Homer's name."<sup>2</sup>

So much for the contents of the cyclic poems. As for their authors, so little is known, that except for the sake of tracing them chronologically, where that is possible, from Homer, they need no special mention. The earliest of them, Arctinus the Milesian, called "a disciple of Homer" by Artemon in his book concerning the poet, is placed by Suidas in the ninth Olympiad, and four hundred years after the Trojan war. Eusebius places him in the first Olympiad.<sup>3</sup> The date thus given to Arctinus places him quite close to Homer, according

<sup>1</sup> xiv. 638 C.

<sup>2</sup> On Creophylus, compare Plut. *Lycurg.* 4, and Plato, *Rep.* x. p. 600 <sup>3</sup> Suidas *in voce*, and Eusebius, *Chron.*, who synchronizes him with B., who calls him ἑταῖρος Ὁμηρου,— Pekah the son of Remaliah, 2 Kings xv. 37.

to the reckoning of Herodotus; and this proximity is another argument in favour of that reckoning which for other reasons was above preferred; for it would evidently not be natural to remove the distinguished disciple too far in time from the master to whose school he belonged. The name of Arctinus also occurs in the curious old stucco tablet, used in all probability as a pictorial aid to teaching in the old Roman schools, called the *Tabula Iliaca*.<sup>1</sup> In this tablet occurs likewise the name of the second notable cyclic poet in the list of Proclus, Lesches the Lesbian, whom Eusebius places in the thirtieth Olympiad, 657 B.C., and Syncellus, between Archilochus and Thales, contemporary with the early Spartan poet Alcman. To Agias of Trezene, the author of the 'Returns,' according to Proclus, no special date is assigned; but that poem is by some attributed to Eumelus of Corinth,<sup>2</sup> whom Clemens, in the passage above quoted, makes older than Archilochus and contemporary with Archias, by whom the Corinthian colony of Syracuse was founded in the year 734 B.C.<sup>3</sup> The most recent of these writers of the early Epic school of Greece, Eugammon of Cyrene, is comparatively quite modern, being ranked by Syncellus along with Æsop and Pythagoras, as belonging to the period when Tarquin and Pisistratus were attempting to quash the rising liberties of the West, then represented by the vigorous aristocracy of Rome and

<sup>1</sup> The *Tabula Iliaca* was found on the Appian road, at a place called *Fratocchie*, not far from the ancient *Bovillæ*, about twelve miles from Rome. It will be found in Visconti, *Mus.*, cap. iv. 68; Millin, *Galerie Mythol.* Plate cl.; and in Müller's little book, *De Cyclo Grecorum Epico*, Leipzig. 1829, in a cheap form very convenient for students.

<sup>2</sup> That is, if the *Εδμολησ*, in Schol.

Pind. Ol. xiii. 31, may be considered a misprint for *Εδμηλησ*; as Welcker thinks, which seems quite reasonable. But Pausanias, who often alludes to Eumelus (iv. 4. 1, and ii. 1. 1), does not know of his authorship of the *πόστοι*.

<sup>3</sup> The chronologists place him thirty years further back (761 B.C., Clinton), and this harmonizes perfectly with the epithet *πριβεβληκέντα*, used by Clemens.

the rising democracy of Athens, that is, more exactly, in the year 566 B.C.

Such are the few facts that are certainly known with regard to the cyclic poems and their authors; but the conclusions with regard to the character and composition of the Homeric poems, warranted by these facts, are by no means unimportant. In the first place, we see clearly from these accounts that there existed, at a time closely bordering on Homer, a regular series of epic poets, carried down to the very borders of the Marathonian age in Athens; for whatever may be asserted or conjectured about the poetical value of these books, that there is a real epic unity of plan in their arguments generally, will certainly not be denied by any one who carefully considers the documents. The hero who gives unity to the *Aethiopiad* is manifestly Achilles, while Ulysses stands forth as plainly the central figure of the "little Iliad." Unquestionably the Roman critic knew what he was talking about, when he ridiculed the pretentious self-trumpeting and the prosy exposition, from Leda's egg downwards, of some "poeta Cyclicus," who wrote an account of the Trojan war, as we saw above.<sup>1</sup> Doubtless also Callimachus, in one of his epigrams,<sup>2</sup> was not shooting an arrow which could not find a mark, when he said—

"I hate a cyclic poem, and I shy  
The road that sounds with everybody's clatter ;  
I hate the love that every smile can buy,  
And from the public well I drink no water ;  
All vulgar things that everybody uses  
I do detest ;"

and another turner of small verses might certainly calculate on the ready sympathy of many a reader when he wrote—

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, p. 120.

<sup>2</sup> Callim. *Ep.* 30.

Τοὺς κυκλίους τοίτοιν τοὺς αὐτῷ ἔπειτα λέγοντας,  
Μισῶ, λωποδύτας ἀλλοτρίων ἐπέων —

“ I hate your big-mouthed Epic-mongers, men  
Who fill their lines with ‘*then*,’ ‘*what time*,’ and ‘*when*;’  
A purple robe of many rags and hues,  
They patch from Homer, and call theft the Muse !”<sup>1</sup>

As little need we question that Aristotle had good reason for his remark, that the number of separate tragedies which could be carved out of these cyclic poems, compared with the few that were yielded by the Iliad, was a striking proof of the superior unity of plan, and the more intense dramatic action in the great work of Homer.<sup>2</sup> But these strictures cannot, consistently with the present state of our knowledge, be taken so broadly as to place Arctinus, Lesches, Eumelus, and the whole body of early Greek epic poets, out of the category of poets altogether, as mere rhyming chroniclers, stringing old legends together, according to a mere sequence of events, without an ideal organism and an imaginative coherence.<sup>3</sup> There is indeed no proof that Homer and Callimachus referred to these venerable old Homerids at all; a cyclic poem in the Alexandrian and post-Alexandrian ages being a phrase, as Welcker has amply demonstrated, of a very comprehensive and various significance. We have therefore in the most ancient Greece an early epic school, as we have in early England a dramatic school; and the

<sup>1</sup> Polianus in Anthol. Pal. xi. 130. πέροις καὶ διπόλοις καὶ Σίνων καὶ Τρωδεῖς.—*Poet.* 23.

<sup>2</sup> τοιγαροῦν ἐκ μὲν Ἰλιάδος καὶ Ὁδοσ-  
σελας μία τραγῳδία ποιεῖται ἐκατέρας  
ἢ δύο μόνα, ἐκ δὲ Κυπρίων πολλαὶ καὶ  
τῆς μεράς Ἰλιάδος πλέον δύτω, οἷον  
δωλων κρίσις, Φιλοκτήτης, Νεοπτόλεμος,  
Εύρυτυλος, πτωχεῖα, Λάκωνα, Ἰλίου

<sup>3</sup> Wolf (*Prol.* 126) misconceived this subject altogether, partly no doubt from the influence which his own favourite idea exercised over him, partly because before Welcker the subject of the epic cycle had never been seriously considered.

historical reality of the inferior personages of that school being universally admitted, it seems a most unreasonable proceeding to deny reality to their great *Coryphæus*, and explain him away with an air of superior wisdom into a myth or a symbol, or an eponymous nobody. In the second place, as has been well argued by Mure,<sup>1</sup> the existence of these inferior epic writers constitutes the strongest possible argument for the previous existence of their great prototypes, in the shape in which we now have them. For the attentive reader will no doubt have observed how carefully all the writers mentioned abstain from meddling with that portion of the epic material which had been appropriated by Homer. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were ground already possessed and sacred. Had Arctinus known nothing of the *Iliad*, as containing in full epic completeness that grand event in the life of Achilles which we now admire in the *Iliad*, but known it only vaguely as a famous collection of loose floating ballads about the Trojan war, he would certainly not have commenced his poem, with such curious accuracy, as Quintus Smyrnaeus did afterwards in his post-Homeric epic, at the very moment where Homer's story breaks off. Lastly, it is plain, from the abstracts given of these early epic poems, that the longest of them was of very inferior magnitude to the *Odyssey* or the *Iliad*, as we now have these poems, or even to the *Iliad* curtailed of its proportions by one-third, according to Mr. Grote's theory, to be presently discussed; and these comparative magnitudes in the present case stand in direct proportion to the estimate which ancient Greece formed of the comparative stature of their authours. And justly so. Because though mere bulk is not itself a proof of genius, and verses, like testimonies, ought to be weighed, not

<sup>1</sup> Vol. ii. p. 312.

counted, nevertheless when magnitude is combined with genius, the work of larger extent will be the work likewise of a more powerful inspiration. A great genius is naturally fertile, strong, and comprehensive. A large river makes for itself a broader channel than a tiny brook ; a chariot with six horses is not so easily driven at full gallop as a gig with one ; the architect of a cathedral with many parts requires a more ample intellectual survey, and a more constant eye for harmony, than the builder of a petty chapel. The Greeks felt this ; and therefore, though in the early age of literary reflection there was a certain confounding of the author of the two great epics with some inferior minstrels of the cycle, yet from this popular error the sound judgment of the great mass of thinking Hellenes soon drew back. They knew Homer by his works, even as we, in some old thick-walled mountain-hold in this part of the world, love to recognise a huge sword which only a Bruce or a Wallace could wield.

One question only under the present head remains. What led Homer, amid the ample wealth of traditional epic materials that lay before him, to choose the wrath of Achilles for his theme ? The wrath of Achilles and the death of Hector—for the one implies the other—are only the most decisive moments of the Trojan war ; and the Trojan war was chosen by an Æolo-Ionian minstrel as the subject of a great popular epic, simply because it was the most famous epic event native to the soil, and one that stirred most forcibly the greatest number of chords in the hearts of the Greek colonists in those regions. The Heracleidan invasion of the Peloponnesus, as we have already seen,<sup>1</sup> sent the expelled Achæans of the Peloponnesus, and among them the descendants of Agamemnon, to find new settlements on the sunny

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, p. 78.

coasts of Asia Minor. These emigrants, of course, brought with them the rhymed praises of their kings and chieftains, faithfully preserved since the great Trojan expedition, in the songs of the family minstrels ; and of these songs, grafted on the Priamean ballads of the Troad, Homer was the inheritor. To such an audience as that which listened to the minstrel lore on the coasts of the *Ægean* about three hundred years after the taking of Troy, a poet who should have chosen the Argonautic expedition, or the Theban war, or the exploits of Hercules, as the theme of a weighty song, would have shown himself deficient alike in the instinct of the true poet and the tact of the professional minstrel.<sup>1</sup>

Connected with the choice of his subject may be mentioned the singular fancy of Mitford, that Homer must have written before the return of the Heracidae, otherwise he would certainly have taken some notice of that remarkable event.<sup>2</sup> But the argument from silence is always weak, even when to have mentioned a particular fact would have strengthened the cause of the speaker. But according to the account of the natural choice of his subject just given, Homer, who as an Ionian poet inherited the glories of an Ionian race, had no more to do with the Dorian invaders of the Peloponnesus than Virgil, whose hero was a Trojan, had with the Greeks, or Milton in his Christian epics with Mohammed.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On this subject, Düncker, in his *Geschichte des Alterth.* I. 275, has written admirably; as indeed there are few Germans who combine such extent of learning with such breadth of view, moderation, sound sense, and, at the same time, write in such a plain, weighty, lucid, and effective style.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. i.

<sup>3</sup> The other arguments of Mitford are equally weak, and are ably refuted by Clinton, vol. i. p. 362.

## DISSERTATION V.

### ON THE GENERIC CHARACTER OF THE MINSTREL EPIC, AS CONTRASTED WITH THE EPIC OF LITERARY CULTURE—MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF THE HEROIC AGE.

THE foregoing discussions seem to embrace everything of an external and extraneous nature, the knowledge of which is necessary to a true appreciation of the great national epic of ancient Greece. We now come to look at the poem itself—to what the theologians call the internal evidence that appertains to this most important document of literary history. Of course, the first thing to be done here is to read the poem; and, presuming that all those who take any interest in such inquiries as the present are familiar with the general scope and the grand outline of so famous a work, I proceed now to state, under a few brief heads, the generic character of the poetry to which it belongs. And the important proposition here to be laid down is, that the *Iliad* belongs to that genus of the great Epic family which the Germans call the *Volksepos*, and which we may translate literally, the popular epic, as opposed to the *Kunstlepos*, or the epic of literary culture. In form, these two genera are of course one. They must contain whatever is essential to a great narrative poem of lofty conception, of stirring

power, and of great national significance. But in tone, spirit, and contents, they may be, and to some extent always are, essentially different. Milton and Homer are both great epic poets; but the work of the one is as different in style, tone, and effect from the work of the other, as a Florentine palace is from a Swiss cottage. Now, the peculiar character and tone of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, apart from the question of structure and organism, is specifically the tone and character which belongs to minstrel poetry, or, as we call it familiarly, ballad poetry, as distinguished from the productions of poetic art in an age of literary culture. The difference between minstrel poetry and the poetry of literary art is given necessarily with the character of the age to which it belongs. The minstrel sings or recites for the entertainment of a race of simple but stout and healthy-minded men, who know nothing of books; the literary poet writes and publishes for a generation of nice readers, subtle thinkers, and fastidious critics—a people who can do nothing without printed paper, and for whose souls books have become almost as essential as bread is to their bodies. The conditions of growth being so totally diverse, it cannot be that the flower and the fruit brought to maturity under such different influences should not present a corresponding diversity. And yet of such difficult attainment is the true appreciation of a poet removed from us by wide gulfs both of time and of habitude, that we have had great poets, like Cowper, who do not seem to have been able to distinguish between the tone of Milton and the tone of Homer. Perhaps even in the year 1865, seventy years after the publication of Wolf's 'Prolegomena,' in a country characteristically conservative of traditional opinions, there may be some to whom the words of that great critic may apply: "*Nondum enim prorsus ejecta*

*et explosa est eorum ratio, qui Homerum et Callimachum et Virgilium et Nonnum et Miltonum eodem animo legunt, nec, quid uniuscujusque actas ferat, expendere legendu et computare laborant.*<sup>1</sup> And the name of the false criticisms is legion, which have been pronounced on the assumption that the author of the Iliad ought to be compared, in the first place, and specially, with the author of the 'Æneid' and of the 'Paradise Lost,' because in point of artistic form and structure the works of these different authors are identical. This is an error much more pardonable indeed, though not less injurious in its effects, than that common one which so long led our British critics to compare Æschylus with Corneille or Shakspeare, merely from the delusive similarity of the name by which the works of the great writers for the ancient and modern stage were known; while in truth our tragedy, in all its great means of producing effect, is one thing, and the Greek *τραγῳδία* another,—being rather a sacred opera, and having more points in common with the musical exhibition now called an oratorio, than with our existing tragedy. Let us therefore endeavour to state some of the leading characteristics of the popular Epic, characteristics which it has in common with all ballad poetry, in the same way that a grand cathedral in the Gothic style has all its most striking features in common with a small chapel or shrine built in the same style. In variety of parts, in magnitude, grandeur, and proportion only, does the Iliad of Homer differ from the ballad poetry, out of which, as the natural intellectual food of the infancy of all nations, it was developed. Not a few persons I have observed seem to think that Homer is degraded when he is called a ballad-singer, even if I should call him the king of ballad-singers, who may differ as much

<sup>1</sup> *Prolegomena*, xii.

from his congeners as a political king does from a beggar;<sup>1</sup> but no man who knows what ballad-poetry really contains, and who is at all capable of perceiving its peculiar merit, will allow himself to be deceived by a superficial notion of this sort. By the word 'ballad' is implied nothing vulgar, careless, or slipshod, but only a something of simplicity, nature, and truth, which belongs to all early popular poetry, as distinguished from the poetry of advanced literature and highly cultivated art. "*Hæc carmina paullo diligentius cognita admirandam ostendunt vim naturæ: atque ingenii, minorem artis, nullam reconditæ doctrinæ et exquisitæ.*"<sup>2</sup> These are the words of the greatest modern Homerid, Wolf; and I consider they contain the most important sentence in his masterly 'Prolegomena.' Let us then attempt to bring forward one or two points constituting the generic character of the popular Epic, to which the Iliad belongs. The examples for our present use will be taken from that poem, but the points themselves are derived from a large induction of all popular poems, from the simplest street ballad, the historical ballads of the Servians, the modern Greeks, and our own Scottish ballads, to such large narrative structures as the Niebelungen lay, the Carlovingian and Arthurian romances, the great Finnish poem the Kalewala, the Ossianic songs, and the ponderous heroic poems of the Hindoos. Now the first great characteristic of the popular Epic, as of the ballads which furnish its material, is that it has to do with great national facts, and persons of national celebrity, and that it presents a living picture of truly national manners, customs,

<sup>1</sup> "Vates ille tantum distat a silvestrium coetuum cantoribus, quantum a poetis eruditarum etatum."—Wolf, *Prod. XII.*

is striking: "Homeri ingenium maximum, ars ejusmodi ut eam potius inventio quam excoluisse videatur."—*Poet. v. 2.*

<sup>2</sup> The agreement here with SCALIGER

and sentiments. In other words, it is the genius of the people that dominates, not of the individual. Among modern poets, Wordsworth, for instance, represents his own philosophical self; Coleridge, his own metaphysical self; and Shelley, his own transcendental self; but they do not represent the British nation, and have, with all their genius, only a comparatively small section of admirers. Not so Homer. He represented the Greeks as much as a spokesman of an English jury does the sentiments of the jury; as much as an orator in a Christian pulpit does the faith and devout feelings of a Christian congregation; as much as the writer of a leading article in the 'Times' does the general social instincts and political tendencies of the English people. We are to accept, therefore, as already said, his Trojan war, his Achilles, his Agamemnon, his Ulysses, as great primal facts in the consciousness of the Asiatic Hellenes; as great human facts, contradistinguished from those phantoms of degraded water-gods and mud-gods of which Forchhammer and other ingenious Germans have speculated. We need not, however, beat our brains to inquire in what precise year, or in what century before Christ, the expedition against Priam took place: much less shall we quote the verses of an old ballad-book without discrimination in every case, as if they were the clauses of an Act of Parliament; for we know that we have to do with a work of imagination, and that the popular imagination, though it does not employ itself in forming fictitious personalities, has a wondrous virtue sometimes most strangely to transform real ones. But the important matter in Homer, and such works, is not so much the truth of the individual facts, as the truthfulness of the general representation. In the Iliad and Odyssey we have the most truthful picture of Greek life in the early ages, and the leading traits

of Greek feeling and Greek faith in all ages. It is the remark of Aristotle, that Homer, though not in form a dramatist, is the most dramatic of all Greek writers, for, except in his exordium of a few lines, he never speaks in his own person, but at once introduces his characters speaking, and they always speak consistently with the occasion, and with themselves.<sup>1</sup> This is what the Germans call the objectivity, or objectiveness of the Homeric style—a phrase that, like certain other German phrases, has obtained great currency amongst us lately, though I am not sure that we have got any new idea along with it. Certain it is, however, that all popular poetry, and especially Homeric poetry, is eminently objective, or, as I should rather say, in old unscholastic English, dramatic. Homer did not desire to poetize himself any more than St. Paul did to preach himself.<sup>2</sup> He is only a showman ; and his poem is the moving panorama of Greek life. Look at it. “Away !” said Fuseli, to some of the poets and poetlings of his time, “away with your big words and your sublime flights, and your transcendental ecstasies and your vague emotions, and your windy fatherlandizing ; give me a picture, give me something that I can see, something that I can paint, something that I can find in every page of rare old Homer !”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* iv. 9, and xxiv. 7.

<sup>2</sup> “Homer’s eye is always on his object ; Pope composes with his eye on his style, into which he translates his object”—ARNOLD, *On Translating Homer*, Lect. i. p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> The peculiar claim of Homer to be called the painter among poets has been lately stated by Lord Derby, one of the most accomplished and successful of recent English translators of the *Iliad*, at the annual dinner of the Royal Academy, May 1, 1865, in the following eloquent language :—“If it be true

that *ut pictura poesis*—if it be true that poetry is word-painting and painting is visible poetry, then I think I may venture to claim for that great original I have endeavoured to copy, that he was among the greatest painters of any country in the world. For, let me ask you and this assembly, what are the great qualities which are required to form a distinguished painter ? First, I apprehend, they are fidelity to nature, a genuine appreciation of the beauties of nature ; a vivid imagination ; a correct and anatomical knowledge of the

One of the most striking manifestations of this painter's instinct in Homer is the manner in which he uses epithets. These qualifications of the subject are not only with him peculiarly abundant, but used in a manner quite abhorrent from our ideas of taste, derived as these are from the practice of poetical artists of a later age. With our poets the epithet belongs to the action and the position, and varies always curiously and cunningly as these vary. In Homer, after the model of the ballad-singers, the epithet cleaves to the man, and goes about with him constantly, as a red coat does with a soldier, or a shovel hat with a bishop.<sup>1</sup> To the

formation of the human frame; a correct and almost equally anatomical knowledge of all the expressions, feelings, and passions of the human mind; a correctness of outline, boldness of touch, a vividness of colouring, a judicious distribution of light and shade; and, the great quality of all others, in grouping the subjects together, so to arrange your groups that each individual figure shall possess its own characteristic merit and position, and yet all unite to concentrate the eye and attention on the great central and principal figure of the group. Now, if these are really the characteristics of painting, I claim for Homer that in no age and no country has any painter surpassed the infinite variety of his achievements. It is not in one branch alone, but it is in historical painting, in landscape, I may say even in portrait painting, he stands almost unrivalled in each and every one of them. If he desires to bring before you an extended group of gods, or warriors, or chieftains in debate, he presents a variety and individuality among them that would create the envy of a Maclise, a Herbert, or a Frith. If he desires to

represent the ocean in its milder or stormier characters by a few rapid touches, he produces a sketch a Stanfield might look on with envy. If he paints the vineyard or harvest-home, he bathes the landscape in a flood of light which a Linnell would hardly venture to emulate. And, passing to the wilder features of rural life, the representation of the passions and contests of the brute creation—if he attempts to describe a lion springing at and striking down a bull in the midst of the herd, or a wounded boar turning on his pursuers, or a pack of wolves with blood-stained jaws lapping with their lean tongues the cool surface of some dark-watered fountain, or a wounded panther writhing itself up the spear that has transfixed her in order to reach her assailant, the few touches which Homer gives bring before the mental eye the whole scene with a life and vigour which could hardly be equalled by an Ansdell or surpassed by a Landseer."

<sup>1</sup> On this, as on most other points, Keble had a true insight into the genius of Homer's poetry:—"Præterea, non obscure redolet tum rusticis

same pictorial instinct belongs the peculiar breadth and detailed minuteness of the Homeric similes, which seldom rest contented, as our modern similes do, with flashing out the one point of analogy required for the occasion, but generally indulge in painting out the picture, for the pure imaginative luxury of looking at the object in its completeness. If I were to give examples of this pictorial richness, combined with simplicity, in the rare old minstrel, I should occupy the whole section in stringing pearls. Take only two instances: first, the simile of the stalled horse, which occurs twice in the Iliad, once in the sixth book in reference to Paris, and once again in the fifteenth book in reference to Hector:—

“ Nor then his lofty hall to leave was Alexander slow ;  
 His fine-wrought mail he deftly dight all burnish'd fair to view,  
 And with wing'd feet from street to street right through the town  
 he flew :  
 Even as a horse in stall confined, and fed with ample grain,  
 Snaps his harsh bond, and eager beats with sounding hoof the  
 plain ;  
 Oft hath he gone to lave his flanks in the deep smooth river's bed,  
 And now the well-known stream he seeks and high he rears his  
 head ;  
 Adown his shoulders shakes his mane ; proud of his strength  
 is he ;  
 And flings his limbs light o'er the turf where the haunts of horses be.

tatem, tum militiam, quod in illo regum ducumque choro vix unum alterumque invenias, cui non adhæreat suum quodammodo cognomen. Hinc illa, πόδας ὡς Ἀχιλλεύς, νεφεληγερέα Ζεύς, κορυφαῖος Ἐκτωρ, sexcenta alia. Erant illas formulæ solennes ac pene legitimæ, quas tantum non religio suisset præterire. Neque vero in Deos solos hominesque convenit iste τῶν

οἰκεῖων usus : verum etiam rem quam- que notissimam suo tanquam apposito ornavit. Exempli loco sint, ταῦτης θάνατος, ἀτρύγετος θάλασσα, μέροπες ἀνθρώποι, κήρυκες λιγύφθογγοι, μάνυχες ἵπποι, cætera id genus. Ea qui fastidio habent, parum vidisse putandi sunt in simplici illo ac plebeio sermone, cuius quasi norma in Homericis omnia fere metiri debemus.”

Thus Priam's son from Troy came forth all eager for the fray,  
Far-gleaming in his burnish'd arms like the light that lords the day."

Then take the famous lines from the parting of Hector and Andromache :—

"Thus he : and stretch'd his arm to clasp his infant son so dear ;  
But on the breast of his well-zoned nurse the child shrunk back  
with fear,  
Scared at the gleam of the burnish'd brass which cased that  
warrior dread,  
And scream'd to see the horse-hair crest high nodding o'er his head.  
The father laugh'd, the mother smiled ; then Hector brave unbound  
The helmet from his head, and laid it glittering on the ground,  
And kiss'd his son and dandled him aloft with fondest joy,  
Then to great Jove and all the gods thus pray'd to bless the boy :  
Jove and ye mighty gods, grant this my son one day may be  
As I am now to Trojan men, the bulwark of the free,  
And reign o'er Troy by valorous might ; then from the hostile  
fray  
Shall some one see him home return, and thus shall proudly say,  
From a good sire a better son hath rescued Troy to-day ;  
And when he bears proud trophies through the sounding streets of  
Troy,  
His mother shall behold her son, and her heart shall leap for joy."

Another characteristic of the ballad style, very prominent in the works of Homer, is a certain easy flowing fulness and amplitude, sometimes not much elevated above the tone of colloquial gossip, and not at all free from tautology (though perhaps some of these instances of repetition may be justly attributed to the interpolation of the rhapsodists); no studied condensation, no antithetic balancing as in Pope, no elaborate pregnant conciseness as in Tacitus and Tennyson. Homer was simply a perfectly accomplished musical story-

teller, and he knew that pictorial vividness of conception, and a pleasant flow of expression combined with variety and contrast, are the great excellences of a story-teller. He suited his own audience perfectly, but just for that reason he is not always a model for us.<sup>1</sup> Again, a striking characteristic of all ballad poetry is its harmony with common life, and close brotherhood with the actual. In it there is no ideal elevated hopelessly above the real, no world of internal emotions instinctively rebellious against the world of outward circumstances. In Homer, so far as men are concerned, the real and the ideal are one, or, more correctly, the ideal is merely the flower of the real, metamorphosed, to speak with the botanists, substantially out of the green leaves of the real.

<sup>1</sup> The above remarks show in how far I think Mr. Newman right when he said Homer was "garrulous." Here, as in some other points, the truth seems to lie half-way between him and Professor Arnold; though Newman certainly mistook the usage of the English language altogether when he called Homer "quaint." An Italian writer of the seventeenth century, full of enthusiasm for the great epic genius of his country, expresses his sense of the amplitude of Homer's style in very strong terms:— "*La soverchia lunghezza d'Homero; il qual nel vero più tosto per molta abbondanza di parole e ridondanti repetitioni, che con maravigliose inventioni aggrandio più tosto allungò i suoi poemi.*"—Paolo Beni, *Comparatione de Homero, Virgilio e Torquato* (Padova, 1607, p. 42); and Scaliger had the same thing in his eye when, on comparing Virgil's manner with Homer's, to the discredit of the Greek, he says of the Roman, "quod *per paucis datum est, multa detrahendo fecit auctiorem*;"—he put more into Homer's verses by cutting a great deal out of them. In like manner De la Motte— "*Sa narration devait être précise et ingénieuse, au lieu que souvent elle est diffuse et insipide.*"—(*Œuvres*, ii. 45.) And again, "*C'est un des plus grands défauts d'Homère: il veut placer, chemin faisant, tout ce qu'il sait, et il n'est pas scrupuleux sur la place.*"—(*Œuvres*, ii. p. 68.) And Mr. Trapp (*Virgil*, Pref.), who is one of those critics that give a decided preference to Virgil over Homer, specially brings forward the brevity of the author of the *Æneid* as his great and distinguishing excellence: "I take his most distinguishing character to be the accuracy of his judgment, and particularly his elegant and exquisite brevity. He is never luxuriant; never says anything in vain." "We admire others," says Rapin, "for what they say; we admire Virgil for what he does not say."

There is a class of poets in this modern age, who, like the devotees in the Roman Catholic Church, or certain very serious religionists in Scotland, stand in an altogether hostile attitude to the world, and so withdraw from its taint into æsthetical tea-parties; and poetical reunions, just as the devotees do into monasteries, and the Scottish religionists to perpetual prayer-meetings. Homer had no notion of any antagonism of this kind. He had none of the so-called peculiarities and eccentricities of genius. He was a plain man with plain men; going about freely and easily in the world, sharing in all the interests of the hour, with no contempt of what is called vulgar only because it is extremely natural, and with no affectation of what is thought refined only because it is elegantly artificial. With a loyal admiration for kings and a just horror of democracy, the bard of the Iliad is quite familiar with men of all trades and occupations; sees nothing unpoetical in business, and looks with a decidedly utilitarian rather than with a sentimental eye on many natural phenomena. The coats of an onion are to him as fit a simile for a glossy, well-fitted vest as a tissue of sunbeams or rainbows to our modern transcendental poets. You would think that he must have been a swineherd in his youth, his father a Smyrniote farmer, his brother a cartwright or a smith, and his sister a milk-maid, so intimate does he seem with the manner of life of all these classes, and so little careful is he to avoid what a modern critic would pronounce a sinking of style arising from the introduction of homely, vulgar, and ludicrous similes. Take, for instance, the well-known comparison of Ajax to an ass beaten by rude boys, which appears the more undignified that it is immediately preceded by the more worthy parallel of the same hero to a lion:—

“As when a dull mill ass comes near a goodly field of corn  
Kept from the birds by children’s cries ; the boys are overborne  
By his insensible approach, and simply he will eat :  
About whom many wands are broke, and still the children beat ;  
And still the self-providing ass doth with their weakness bear,  
Not stirring till his paunch be full ; and scarcely then will steer :  
So the huge son of Telamon amongst the Trojans fared ;  
Bore showers of darts upon his shield, yet scorn’d to fly, as  
scared ;  
And so kept softly on his way ; nor would he mend his pace  
For all their violent pursuits, that still did arm the chase  
With singing lances.”<sup>1</sup>

Again, the imagination of a Yorkshire farmer is evidently working in the following simile “about *black beans and pease*,” which Pope endeavoured to redeem from vulgarity by turning it into “golden grain.”<sup>2</sup>

“Together rush’d the warriors—eager one  
To hurl his spear, the other to shoot forth  
An arrow from the string. Then Priam’s son  
The hollow of his foeman’s corslet smote  
Beneath the breast ; but off the weapon glanced ;  
As in an ample threshing-floor black beans  
Or vetches, leaping from broad van, fly forth,  
Driven by shrill winds, and by the winnower’s might ;  
So from the mail of noble Menelaus  
Flew, glancing wide, the bitter dart afar.”<sup>3</sup>

Finally, as a sample of the wide field from which he draws his comparisons, but always showing a preference to the sights with which the shepherd, the farmer, and the hunter

<sup>1</sup> Chapman’s *Iliad*, by Taylor. London, 1843.

<sup>2</sup> This homeliness of Homeric illustrations was noticed by the ancients ; and Dio Chrysostom (11), in his discourse on Socrates and Homer, makes it a special point of comparison between

the minstrel and the philosopher. No doubt there were dainty admirers of the large-hearted poet in those days also who could see poetry in the lions and eagles, but not in the beans and pease.

<sup>3</sup> *The Iliad of Homer*, by Ichabod C. Wright. London, 1864.

are most familiar, we may give the long series of similes in the second book, where the Achæans are mustering to battle, immediately before the catalogue of the ships :—

“ As when a wasting fire, on mountain tops,  
Seizes the blazing woods, afar is seen  
The glaring light ; so, as they moved, to Heav’n  
Flash’d the bright glitter of their burnish’d arms.

As when a num’rous flock of birds, or geese,  
Or cranes, or long-neck’d swans, on Asian mead,  
Beside Cäyster’s stream, now here, now there,  
Disporting, ply their wings ; then settle down  
With clam’rous noise, that all the mead resounds ;  
So to Scamander’s plain, from tents and ships,  
Pour’d forth the countless tribes ; the firm earth groan’d  
Beneath the tramp of steeds and armèd men.  
Upon Scamander’s flowery mead they stood,  
Unnumber’d as the vernal leaves and flowers.

Or as the multitudinous swarms of flies,  
That round the cattle-sheds in springtime pour,  
While the warm milk is frothing in the pail ;  
So numberless upon the plain, array’d  
For Troy’s destruction, stood the long-hair’d Greeks.  
And as experienced goat-herds, when their flocks  
Are mingled in the pasture, portion out  
Their sev’ral charges, so the chiefs array’d  
Their squadrons for the fight ; while in the midst  
The mighty monarch Againemnon moved :  
His eye, and lofty brow, the counterpart  
Of Jove, the Lord of thunder ; in his girth  
Another Mara, with Neptune’s ample chest.  
As ’mid the thronging heifers in a herd  
Stands, proudly eminent, the lordly bull ;  
So by Jove’s will, stood eminent that day,  
‘Mid many heroes, Atreus’ godlike son.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Iliad of Homer*, in English Blank Verse. By Edward Earl of Derby  
London, 1864.

As the fourth characteristic of the ballad style, I would mention that undefinable something of naturalness, simplicity, and *naïveté*, the rare endowment of childhood and of the early ages of intellectual culture, which later writers very seldom exhibit (Bunyan being one of the few exceptions), because where it does not exist by nature it cannot be acquired by art, the constant demand for novelty of effect in an age of large literary production, tending to remove both writers and readers from the enjoyment of what is simply natural. This is more of a tone than of a separate tangible quality ; but its continual presence in the happy, unaffected *ηθος*, as the Greeks call it, of the writer, makes it not less powerful than if it could be measured in distinct lines, and felt in appreciable strokes. But we may say generally, that Homer is altogether free from any desire to say things in the most ornate and grandly sonorous style ; as little does he ever show the slightest wish to say things in a novel, startling, or original way. He is nowise ashamed of repeating himself ; he is only anxious to say what he has to say in the most easy, natural, and familiar way ; and this, which is his great virtue with those who love nature and are willing to take things as they are, often when unadorned adorned the most, is a constant and ever recurring offence to those who, like not a few critics of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, infinitely prefer Virgil to Homer, and are honest enough to say so.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is in fact the constantly repeated burden of the comprehensive comparison of Virgil and Homer, made with such energetic display, and sometimes with such blind strokes of fury, in the fifth book of Scaliger's *Poetica*. When Homer describes the hewing down of a tree, the critic indignantly

outbursts, "A carpenter would have described the operation as well;" but when Virgil elevates the same operation by a grand pomp of diction, then *Musa loquitur!* With men who are possessed by such one-sided views of poetry it is impossible to reason.

The reader who may not have recognised this peculiar characteristic in any English Homer, where, in order to make the old bard look like a modern gentleman, it has often been purposely obliterated, will know what it means by recurring to the books of Genesis and Ruth, and other parts of the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> Herodotus also owes no small part of his charm to this quality, as also our own Chaucer.

But it is not more in the style and expression than in the very frame and features of the human life described, that the peculiar character of the popular ballad and the popular epic lies. A poet living in a literary age, and writing books for a reading generation, may throw his imagination back into the earlier stages of society, and with more or less success reproduce the manners of a past age, which, by their very contrast with existing notions and habits, will produce a powerful effect on his readers. In reproductions of this description no modern writer has succeeded so well, or was by nature so well calculated to succeed, as Walter Scott. But in all such works there will be a felt difference between the writer's point of view and the picture which he exhibits; the literary man, however little he may wish to obtrude himself, will occasionally peep out; nor will the fastidiousness of his readers, whatever his personal sympathies might desire, allow him to give such truthful representations of early society as a bard who himself belongs to the simple old world which he sings. No doubt Homer was not strictly the contemporary of the Argive and Thessalian heroes whom he celebrates; no doubt his mighty men are continually lifting huge stones and performing other feats of strength to which the muscles of his contemporaries — *οἰοι νῦν βροτοί εἰσι* —

<sup>1</sup> "Die derbe Natürlichkeit des Alten Testaments und die zarte Naivität des Neuen." — Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*.

are not equal ; but with all this his works betray not the slightest trace of a poet belonging to an age of society essentially different from that which he describes ; not a trace of the literary man with his pen-and-ink appliances, his superfine sentiments, and subtle imaginations, is anywhere visible. Homer is a minstrel every inch as much as any Demodocus or Phemius, whom he introduces in his lay. He is in spirit and hue completely and altogether part of the world which he describes. And the consequence is that the men and the manners of his poem belong as essentially to the style and the expression, as the style and the expression belong to the men. They form one natural living whole, and make one joint homogeneous impression, which may be separated in thought, but not in effect. It is necessary therefore to complete the above remarks on the mere style of the Homeric poems by some general outline of the great features of that peculiar form of social life which they describe. A full account of the manners and customs of the heroic age is a large subject, and will not be expected here ; many details are reserved for the notes ;<sup>1</sup> but the general picture here given is intended specially for that not inconsiderable class of Homeric readers, who, though they may have no particular taste for the *Iliad* as a work of imaginative art, find it invaluable as one of the oldest records of human history. For I would by no means conceal from myself the fact that there are always many noble-minded and high-hearted persons living in the world who have no taste for poetry strictly so called, whose own lives perhaps are an epic poem and a song of victory in their own sphere, but to whom the cunningly ornate and finely harmonized description of their own unobtrusive

<sup>1</sup> A useful book of reference on the whole matter in Homer's poems is *Realien in der Iliade und Odyssee*, von J. B. Friedrich (1856).

heroism, or that of their neighbours, is a matter of indifference, perhaps of annoyance. I am well aware also that even the special lovers of rhythmical composition in the present age are not all for that reason necessarily the admirers of Homer; on the contrary, the curious elaboration, the imaginative luxuriance, the subtle fancifulness, the high-strained idealism, the far-reaching speculation, the metaphysical self-anatomizing inspection of modern poetry, are elements which, if they once become the habitual food of our higher nature, will withdraw a great many of the more delicately sensitive readers of poetry from the enjoyment of Homer.<sup>1</sup> Those who love to soar in an aerial balloon with Percy Bysshe Shelley, or to wrestle with the darkest social problems of the day under the leadership of the authoress of 'Aurora Leigh,' will not be apt to consider the wrath of a Thessalian captain, or the wanderings of a worldly-wise Ithacan laird among savages and giants 3000 years ago, subjects of very hopeful significance for the lofty Muse, by whom they love to be inspired. Persons who have been accustomed to ride on a winged Pegasus will not readily condescend to mount a common horse, whose highest exploit is to gallop over a green common, where merely mortal kine, sheep and geese, crop vulgar grass, or to leap across a triple-barred gate, and a double ditch, with only a human hunter on his back. But such persons, although they may not be willing, if they are honest, to profess any great admiration for Homer's poetry any more than for Walter Scott's, yet if they have true hearts in their bosoms, and are not merely employed

<sup>1</sup> "Nempe eo jam res devenit, ut in carminibus fingendis nihil sere agere videatur qui non perpetuus quasi lumenibus oculos legentium prestringere noverit. Nihil jam grave, simplex, sincerum; inquieta omnia, et vaga et turbida, ne dicam prodigiosa et immania crepant. . . . Ut uno verbo dicam, ingenio nimium tribuitur, veritati parum."—Keble, *Prælect.* i. p. 6.

under the name of poetry in daintily nursing a few morbid conceits, will have no difficulty in allowing their eyes to rest curiously, and it may be even lovingly, on the real pictures of healthy human life which the Homeric poems present. For whatever dogmatic and sceptical battles may have been fought about the Trojan war or the plain of Troy, not one of all those who occupy the wide interval between Lachmann and Gladstone has denied the truthfulness of the Homeric poems as pictures of ancient Greek life. In this respect, unquestionably, they are perfect ; as perfect as the scenes of Ayrshire peasant life in Burns, or the Parisian photographs of Béranger. Into this venerable old Achaean show-box, therefore, all will gladly take a peep ; and persons of the most exalted ideal and the most fervid faith may rest assured that they will find in the pages of Homer, accurately depicted, if not the highest model of human excellence to which they aspire, something certainly very far above the lowest type of social humanity which the records of history present. The people that, in its manhood, sent forth a Socrates, a Plato, and an Aristotle, is not likely to have produced rickety imps and stunted miscreations in its infancy ; should rather have sent forth men who, like its own Hercules, were found strangling serpents in their cradle.

The first thing that strikes us as characteristic in the life of the Homeric heroes, is that one of their principal employments is war. The great hero is the great soldier ; the ruling man, as in modern Russia, must show a sword and baton and a military cloak as his recognised signs of superiority ; and eloquence, though largely practised by the glib and fluent Greek, is chiefly valued to direct the counsels of the camp, and to control the movements of the battle-field. To us, now-a-days, this is apt to appear a strange state of things.

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We look upon war, in Britain at least, rather as a disagreeable necessity than as desirable occupation ; but this has not been the general state of public feeling even in modern times, except very recently. War has always been one of the grand occupations of great nations, and, let us say also, one of the great training-schools of national virtue. Even now, when a belief in the sacredness of human life is in such favour as to have assumed the character of a beautiful disease rather than a healthy instinct, we may see, when a great war breaks out that calls the energies and passions of the whole nation into play, how flashes of the highest moral heroism are constantly bursting forth from behind the dun smoke of the war-guns, which make the brightest of our housekeeping and shopkeeping virtues look pale. And though we write no longer in verse the glorified story of famous wars—

‘Canto l’armi pietose e’l Capitano  
Che il gran sepolcro liberò di Christo,’

Milton having, as it appears, put his veto on this sort of thing against all future bards—yet a well-written history of a great national war may still be the most interesting book of the season, and outdo both Dickens and Wilkie Collins in popularity ; and a well-written history is only an epic poem without adventitious decoration, and without exact dates. In fact, notwithstanding all the familiar horrors of wholesale massacre, and conflagration, disease, famine, and thousandfold atrocity which war implies, the military profession contains, notwithstanding these horrors—partly perhaps because of them—what Aristotle rightly termed a great part of human virtue.<sup>1</sup> For though a love of fighting be as

<sup>1</sup> ὁ στρατιωτικὸς βίος πολλὰ ἔχει μέρη τῆς ἀρετῆς.—*Pol.* II. 9.

natural to the lowest type of man as to dogs and tigers, yet the courage displayed in a cool and well-ordered campaign is an altogether different affair. But besides courage the soldier requires extraordinary constancy, decision, firmness, and perseverance. He must temper adventure with caution, check passion by discipline, and be ready to sacrifice his own comforts on every occasion for the good of the whole to which he belongs. Further, the military character is generally remarkable for a certain freshness and truthfulness, a generosity and magnanimity, a directness and manliness, which contrast favourably with the opposite qualities as they are proverbially manifested in the reticent diplomatist, the shifty lawyer, and the thrifty tradesman. Neither should we forget that excellence of a soldier which lies in the complete and expert command which he exercises over his body and all its members. Of this excellence the Greeks always had the most vivid appreciation, as the prominence of gymnastics in their education clearly shows; and in the *Odyssey*, the luxurious Phæacian entertainer of Ulysses exhorts the old sea-worn traveller to try a cast at quoits, in the following couplet:—

οὐδὲν γὰρ μείζον κλέος, ἀνέρος ὄφρα κεν γῆσιν,  
ηδὸν τι ποσσίν τε βέβει καὶ χερσὶν ἐγῆσιν—

“ No greater praise a man may gain, while breath his body warms,  
Than what he does with cunning strain of lusty legs and arms.”<sup>1</sup>

I do not think, indeed, in these modern times we estimate at half their proper worth the effects of a fine physical training, such as the Greek military habits and gymnastic schools encouraged, in producing that noblest work of God, a healthy, well-proportioned, and well-exercised human being. We are

<sup>1</sup> *Odys. viii. 147.*

too bookish in our notions, and are apt to think that by arming the brain with certain retail formulas of learning and science, and giving an examiner's certificate accordingly, we send out a proper man to the world, fit for any encounter. But it is not so. To do anything in the world, a man must first, as that healthy old couplet says, have his legs and arms in good condition ; and this is what no examination questions, and no packing of the brain with schoolmaster's receipts and shreds of academical paper-lore can achieve. I feel always, when I read Homer, that one of my chief pleasures consists in having to do with such lusty-bodied men, who, though they sometimes fight to excess, are never feeble ; who nowhere tell of their stomachs and their nerves, and never torture their brains with incalculable theories and unfathomable speculations. I do not care, literally, indeed, for the sort of chopping and stabbing work that is constantly going on ; but I like the decision and thorough good-humour with which even their ferocities are perpetrated. One may readily imagine a higher ideal of a man, than when it is said—

*σύν δ' ἔπεσον, λείουσιν ἔσικότες ὠμοφάγουσιν  
ἢ συνὶ κάπροισιν, τῶν τε σθένος οὐκ ἀλαταδνόν—*

“ Fierce even as lions in grim mood the gory flesh devouring,  
Or like the wild boar in the wood, whose strength is over-powering.”<sup>1</sup>

One is also moved with pity not a little when Adrastus, the son of a wealthy father in the Troad, after having succeeded in moving the heart of Menelaus to spare his life, is mercilessly speared by the king of men, addressing his soft-hearted brother in the following terms :—

<sup>1</sup> Iliad vii. 256.

“ O gentle-hearted brother mine, who weepest for thy foe,  
 Say, wert thou then by Trojan men at Sparta treated so ?  
 False Trojans ! may no man that bears that name escape the  
 doom  
 Our hands prepare, not even the babe that in his mother’s womb  
 Lies yet unborn, but one and all that our just rights deny  
 With Troy shall fall ; unhonoured here, unburied let them lie ! ”<sup>1</sup>

And even the women of the Iliad, though nothing bloody in their actions, are sufficiently truculent sometimes in their speech ; as when Hecuba, in the violence of maternal grief, wishes that “ with her close-infixed teeth she may eat through the liver of the stout Greek man who slew her son.” No English lady could decently utter such a wish even in the high-strung excitement of the last act of a tragedy.<sup>2</sup> But we must bear in mind, when offended somewhat by such atrocities,—which are not mere wishes upon paper, as nothing in Homer is, but part of the living temper of the times—that we have to do in this poem with Orientals, not with Europeans (though even at this degree of western longitude, Frenchmen and other Celts, and perhaps Saxons too, in America, as even the most recent history shows, are capable of any barbarity) ; and if we want to throw a mild and charitable light over the red deaths of the Iliad, we have only to go to the Books of Judges and of Kings, where we shall find the Jews, and among them even pious King David, exulting loudly in far more unmitigated savagery. It would appear, indeed, that the farther east we go the more fierce does man become, and in battle the least to be distinguished from the tigers, with whom in these hot regions he

<sup>1</sup> Iliad vi. 55.

<sup>2</sup> I have been told since writing this that Beatrice in Shakspeare uses similar language. This is interesting, as

another proof that the age of Shakspeare was more Homeric in respect of strong nature and passionate vigour than that in which we live.

is often associated. But neither are there wanting in the Homeric poems the finest gleams of kindly human feeling, which, like some green sun-lit slope amid the dark red Bens of Ross-shire, spread an unexpected beauty over the carnage. We have already alluded to the triumph of human pity in the admirable closing book of the Iliad, and there is no scene in any war-poem more pleasing than that in the sixth book of the same poem, where Diomede recognises the son of an old friend of his father in one of his opponents, and with a chivalrous piety most characteristic of the age, refuses to treat him as an enemy—

“ Beseechs not me to fight with thee ! shun we the hostile fray !  
 Full many Trojans and allies in battalious array,  
 A god shall give into my hand, whom I may justly kill,  
 As Greeks there be reserved for thee, to prove thy warlike skill ;  
 Exchange we then our armour bright, that all the camp may see  
 How I revere the sacred right of host and guest in thee.  
 Thus he ; and as friend meets with friend they from their steeds  
 alighted,  
 Each other's hand with hearty grasp they seized, and faith they  
 plighted.  
 But Kronos' son brave Glaucus of his wits did surely fine,  
 Who gave Tydides for base brass bright mail of golden shine,  
 And armour worth a hundred beeves for armour worth but nine.”

So much of the fine chivalrous element lived unquestionably in the soul of the fervid old Hellenic swordsmen ; but we should err from the truth if we imagined that they were in this respect to be compared to the Lancelots, the Sir Gawins, the Sir Kays, and the Sir Galahads of our own Arthurian and other mediæval romances. To lie in ambush for a foe, a feat of which any Greek hero was proud, has, as Panizzi well remarks, so much of the vulgar footpad and mountain brigand about it, that it could not possibly

have been entertained for a moment in thought by a knight of the Round Table ;<sup>1</sup> nor do I imagine any one even of the least gentle of the martial brotherhood that ever convened at Caerleon or Winchester, would not have deemed his knighthood dishonoured by such treatment of a dead adversary as Homer records of all the Greeks in the case of the fallen Hector ; for after Achilles had drawn his copper-headed lance from the bleeding neck of the son of Priam, then

“ All the Greeks came crowding round,  
And on his goodly limbs and shapely corpse each comer cast  
A wondering eye ; and each man dealt a new stab as he pass'd ;  
And, looking on the dead, one Greek thus to his neighbour spoke,  
Soothly this Hector touch from Argive hand doth gentlier brook  
By much, than when above the ships the blazing brand he shook.”

This is natural, but not noble ; and Pope accordingly, with his usual refinement, has softened the offence, by saying that only “ some of the ignobler sort the great dead deface ;” but the Greek poet, true to his people and his age, saw nothing ignoble in the matter, and could not make his fierce Achæan chiefs comport themselves either like the gallant cavaliers in Tasso's epic of the Crusaders, or like a thoroughly disciplined English officer in the Duke of Wellington's Peninsular army.<sup>2</sup>

But the ancient Greeks, though given to war, as all vigorous young nations and high-spirited boys are, were not mere warriors. Had they been such, they would have been Spartans only, not Greeks. This was indeed, as Aristotle has well noted, the great fault, or the great misfortune of Lycurgus, that, finding his Dorians, a race of stout and prosperous

<sup>1</sup> Panizzi, Introd. to *Ariosto*.

<sup>2</sup> The passage in the *Gerusalemme* which most directly contrasts with the selfish ferocity of that just quoted, is in Canto xix. 116-7, where Tancred

shows the most tender solicitude for the kindly and honourable treatment of his fierce adversary's dead body :—

“ Nessun a me col busto esangue e muto  
Riman più guerra.”

invaders, like our own Normans, encamped as it were in a foreign country, with a hostile population all around, he was forced from the evil necessity of his position to make his tenure sure, by turning the whole conquering population into an army, introducing thus into every one's life the usages and habits of war, stamping ignominy upon every other employment, and handing agriculture over to the conquered race of untrained and unarmed serfs, commonly called Helots.<sup>1</sup> By this vigorous and systematic procedure he obtained his end : he made the Spartans the most generous patriots, the stoutest soldiers, and the sternest disciplinarians in Greece ; but he could do no more. One-sidedness is always a sin against the rich and catholic variety of nature ; as it was in those days a special sin also against the buoyant and elastic nature of the Greek, which could not put forth its wonderful power of expansion under the constant pressure of mere martial law and military discipline. From this curse of military one-sidedness the Ionian Greek escaped ; like the ancient Roman, he saw no want of dignity in sheathing the sword to-day that he might follow the plough to-morrow ; and thus, amid the hardening work of habitual or frequent war, he retained those softening and gracious influences which can only have play in the peaceful atmosphere of the farmer's hut and the shepherd's shieling. And of this less obtrusive, though not less real aspect of their daily lives, they found an equally faithful and kindly hearted exponent in Homer. The *Odyssey*, which, though less read, is to a modern reader decidedly the more interesting, as it is certainly the more curiously varied of the two poems, may be called, as contrasted with the *Iliad*, a domestic, and even an agricultural epic. In its issue, as in its

<sup>1</sup> Aristot. *Pol.* ii. 9.

starting-point, it is altogether a home story ; a story of home country life, in a manor of the little island of Ithaca, some three thousand years ago, or rather more ; the sea adventures are only thrown in between, with a long, weary stretch of barren waves and fruitless wanderings, that the fire in the old ancestral hall may burn more brightly, and domestic justice be administered more triumphantly when the lord of the manor returns. Next to the sea-ploughing, many-counselled hero himself, who in the language of those days is called a king, but in our time would only be what in Scotland we call a "big laird," with his pious son and chaste spouse, the most important character in the poem, beyond all compare, is Eumeus, the *διος ὑφορβός*, or "divine swine-herd," who certainly would not have been handed down to us with an epithet that often graces the name of Achilles and other Jove born kings, had his occupation, in the estimation of the times and in the eye of the poet, been much less honourable than that of the warrior. And accordingly we find that even in the Iliad similes from quiet country life are continually introduced to illustrate the rude hurly-burly of reckless-shifting war ; and, not to speak of hunting, the peaceful mimicry of war, shepherds with barking dogs near the fold, watching the inroads of predacious lions ; kingly bulls and ponderous rams walking with stately grace among troops of horned kine and fleecy sheep ; careful farmers with troubled eye watching the flooded torrent rush down from the black sharp-browed gorge, carrying stack and fence, and bothy and plough, and the labours of many months, into the sea ; milkmaids with milk-pails, and armies of shameless flies pushing their invasive snouts into the bubbling bells of what will soon be cream ; sowers and reapers and sheaf-binders, threshers and threshing-floors, yellow corn, dry pease, and

black beans ; carpenters with cunning hands and smiths with thin shanks—all the scenery, machinery, and population of the country, the farm-steading and the country village—are seen through various kindly vistas at the back of Homer's dusty battle-fields, to remind us that there is yet a considerable part of paradise in this wilderness of heroic strife which we call an Epic poem. This peaceful and sunny aspect of old Hellenic life appears with peculiar beauty and fine artistic contrast in some of the embossed pictures in the orbicular shield of Achilles, made by the hands of the divine smith at the request of Thetis, to accoutre her son gloriously as he marched forth to slay Hector and to prepare his own death. From this famous performance, an apt concentration in miniature of the large genius of the poet, I transfer the following lines :—

“ There too he form'd the likeness of a field  
Crowded with corn, in which the reapers toil'd  
Each with a sharp-tooth'd sickle in his hand.  
Along the furrow here, the harvest fell  
In frequent handfuls, there, they bound the sheaves.  
Three binders of the sheaves their sultry task  
All plied industrious, and behind them boys  
Attended, filling with the corn their arms,  
And offering still their bundles to be bound.  
Amid them, staff in hand, the master stood  
Silent exulting, while beneath an oak  
Apart, his heralds busily prepared  
The banquet, dressing a well-thriven ox  
New slain, and the attendant maidens mix'd  
Large supper for the hinds of whitest flour.  
There also, laden with its fruit he form'd  
A vineyard all of gold ; purple he made  
The clusters, and the vines supported stood  
By poles of silver set in even rows.

The trench he colour'd sable, and around  
Fenced it with tin. One only path it show'd  
By which the gatherers when they stripp'd the vines  
Pass'd and repass'd. There, youths and maidens blithe  
In frails of wicker bore the luscious fruit,  
While in the midst, a boy on his shrill harp  
Harmonious play'd, still as he struck the chord  
Carolling to it with a slender voice.  
They smote the ground together, and with song  
And sprightly reed came dancing on behind."<sup>1</sup>

These are the simple pictures of a simple but not meagre style of life, which will always please, so long as men shall be healthy-minded enough to sympathize with what is healthy in nature, and wise enough not to seek an over-stimulated gratification from the contemplation of scenes chosen more to display the power of the painter than the truth of the picture. Generally, indeed, the kind of life described in Homer is characterized above all things by healthiness, naturalness, and simplicity; these being, in fact, only three different names for the same thing, or at least for three things which always imply one another. At the present day, we are so encompassed with all sorts of artificial elegance and cumbrous magnificence, and are trained to such a habitual regard for a hundred amiable or would-be amiable proprieties and conventionalities, that we seldom come face to face with Nature in her primary attitudes and direct utterances, and live, in fact, entangled in a web of the most artificial observances and abstinences, which have become to many of us a second nature. Not so the heroes and heroines of the old Greek epic. On the stage where they act, natural things are always done and spoken of in a natural way, and therefore in a direct and simple way, equally removed from

<sup>1</sup> Iliad xviii.—Cowper.

coarseness and vulgarity on the one hand, and dainty affection or morbid fastidiousness on the other. And it cannot be doubted that this is the quality above all others which commends these poems to all the sons and daughters of this generation who have not allowed themselves to be sold, soul and body, the slaves of its tyrannical refinements. Elegant young gentlemen who have never been accustomed to sit in drawing-rooms except on soft-padded sofas and ottomans flowered over with the most delicate ladies' work, are strengthened in spirit, and feel as they had more bristle on their beards, when they come suddenly before the mansion of Ulysses, and find a jolly company of Ithacan lairds on the green sward before the door, "playing at draughts, and sitting on the hides of oxen which their own hands had slain." Here indeed lies the grand characteristic of that simple, natural, and stout life; men and women, the prince no less than the peasant, doing everything with their own hands, and with their own legs also when necessary; whereas, now-a-days, we have set a-going so many and mighty moral and mechanical machines, that we have often nothing to do but to sit and watch the movements of the curious-wheeled monster, which is indeed the mere creature of our human wit, but which we must nevertheless serve with insignificant ministrations as a slave serves his master. We have printing machines, and washing machines, and calculating machines, and rotatory hair-brushing machines; and by and bye we shall have preaching machines and lecturing machines; but sometimes still, in some lone Highland glen, itinerant Cockneys are amused, and true-hearted painters and poets are delighted, with the exhibition of Nature in some of her simple and Homeric aspects, as when at the bottom of some broad, brawling, amber-bedded mountain-torrent, cutting its

way through long sharp ledges of mica-slate, and whirling and writhing in strange round rocky caldrons, a clear pebbly beach is outspread, and here, with water supplied directly from the bickering fountain, troughs are seen filled with rustic vestments of various colours, from which ruddy-cheeked damsels with lusty legs are diligently tramping out the engrained filthiness—exactly such a scene as Homer has described in a familiar book of the *Odyssey*, where Nausicaa, the fair daughter of the mighty-hearted Alcinous, king of the Phœacians, goes down to the river-side, with her attendant maids, to wash her bridal clothes for her approaching marriage, in waters which, to use the words of the poet, bubble forth in such beauty and abundance as to have power to wash all foulness even from the foulest garments.<sup>1</sup> And as plain acting is thus common even with kings' daughters, we are not to suppose that plain speaking will be absent. In Homer, every one except Ulysses, to whose character it belongs to play the fox, always speaks out his mind in the most muscular style possible. When the Homeric gods brawl, or the Homeric kings bandy reproaches, one feels a triumphant deliverance for a moment from those set forms of inoffensive speech which have no doubt prevented a duel or two on occasions, but which have rendered modern society so insipid and so false. How grandly, in the face of our diplomatic and fashionable untruths of all kinds, does Achilles break forth in the well-known couplet—

“ That man I in my soul detest, even as the gates of hell,  
Whose tongue speaks fair, but in his breast dark lies and  
treachery dwell ! ”<sup>2</sup>

And then with what an electric burst of tempestuous reproach, glorious as a thunder-storm investing the ragged

<sup>1</sup> *Odyss.* vi. 85.

<sup>2</sup> *Iliad ix.* 312.

peak of Scuir-na-Gillean, does the same fiery thane break out in the dire strife of the first book :—

“ O monster ! mix’d of insolence and fear,  
 Thou dog in forehead, but in heart a deer !  
 When wert thou known in ambush’d fights to dare,  
 Or nobly face the horrid front of war ?  
 'Tis ours the chance of fighting fields to try,  
 Thine to look on, and bid the valiant die.  
 So much 'tis safer through the camp to go,  
 And rob a subject, than despoil a foe.  
 Scourge of thy people, violent and base !  
 Sent in Jove’s anger on a slavish race,  
 Who, lost to sense of generous freedom past,  
 Are tamed to wrongs, or this had been thy last.”<sup>1</sup>

The immortal gods amongst themselves, as the reader may see in the eighth book, use similar strong language ; and even when a mortal, struggling with harsh calamity, argues like Job with the immortal gods and the eternal destinies, he uses language sometimes that to us appears far from reverent, but which receives palliation partly from a sort of vice inherent in every form of polytheism, but partly also from the general habit of free speaking characteristic of the age to which the speaker belongs. Thus we find Menelaus, one of the most pious of the Homeric heroes, in the third book of the Iliad, when the sword snaps in his hand with which he was about to execute vengeance on Alexander, burst out, with no words of pious resignation, in these four lines :—

“ O father Jove, above all gods thou dost rejoice in harm !  
 I pray’d to thee in faith to see him fall by my strong arm ;

<sup>1</sup> Iliad i. 297-308.—Pope.

But now my sword in sunder snaps, and, when black death was  
near,  
The well-poised aim thou brought'st to shame of my sure-piercing  
spear!"

So much for their talk ;<sup>1</sup> but their whole manner of life in those times was equally simple and direct, equally unencumbered with curious preparation, equally innocent of luxurious supererogation. Their method of banqueting is the true hunter's or shepherd's fare,—a roasted sheep or ox, of which the king or honoured captain gets a double portion, with a lump of bread and a tumbler of wine mingled with water ; but no boils, or stews, or puddings, much less the dainty delicacy of fish, so dear to the Greek and Roman epicures of a later age. The only article in which the Homeric personages delight to practise a sort of luxurious extravagance is dress ; but this is an innocent kind of excess, which seems natural to every unsophisticated people. In the Niebelungen lay a perfectly childish delight in the contemplation of gold-prinkt vestments everywhere appears. Among the modern Greek peasants the same joy in the glittering external of a living man strikes the sober eye of the traveller from the bleak North. And in fact even our own streets in grey Edinburgh at the present moment exhibit glaring signs of the revival of the taste for gay dressing, which seems natural to man in all stages of civilisation, the only difference being, wherever the cause lies, that in the heroic age all persons dress brightly, in the modern age only women and soldiers.

<sup>1</sup> The blunt humour, directness, and simplicity in the words and deeds of Homer's characters gave great offence to the polished wits of King Charles II.

" For who without a qualm hath ever look'd  
On holy garbage though by Homer cook'd,  
Whose railing heroes and whose wounded gods  
Make some suspect he snores as well as nods ? "

Roscommon on *Translated Verse*.

We now come to look more closely at the outward form and feature of society in those early times ; and this of course is contained in the two comprehensive words, belonging to all complete social organism—State and Church. In the Homeric form of society we find clearly all the three elements, in the just balance of which, according to all experience, a good civil polity consists, — King, Lords, and Commons. No doubt it was the destiny of the two great leading states of the ancient world, Greece and Rome, to get rid of their kings at an early period of their history, and this perhaps, in the then circumstances of the world, was an indispensable condition to civil liberty ; but it is not the less true that in the Homeric times a kingly government was essential to all great political action ; as in our days a mixed government, realizing the theoretical judgments of Polybius, Cicero, and Aristotle, and including the kingly element, has proved the only true safeguard of free institutions. In Homer the monarchical element is asserted with great decision ; in fact the Trojan expedition would have been impossible without it. The real power of the king was founded on the necessity of a perpetual dictatorship in war. But in addition to this, Agamemnon's influence was great, by reason of the extensive territory which acknowledged his sway in continental and insular Greece (whence the epithet *εὐρυκρείων*), and the piety of the age bowed beneath the sceptre in his hand, not without a strong feeling of that divine right, which has its reasonable root in the natural loyalty of a healthy mind, but which was crystallized into a pedantic dogma by the absolutist doctors of the Stuarts in this country. These combined influences alone it was that induced all the chiefs of the Greek army to fight under Agamemnon when Achilles had left the field ; for they could not but feel that in respect

both of social right and military law, the indignant hero had suffered a great wrong, and the insult offered to him was in principle an act of kingly aggression on the whole body of the aristocracy ; and they were well aware that, however, from motives of policy and piety they might choose to yield an absolute obedience even to the harsh commands of the monarch, the real power to fight or not to fight in the cause of the Atridans lay with themselves. For, apart from the necessity of absolute leadership in war, not monarchy, but aristocracy, was the soul of the permanent political form which society assumed in the early history both of Greece and Rome ; and accordingly we find that, except in the two cases of Sparta and the Molossians, the power of the crown, as we term it, was so weak, that the slightest abuse of the kingly privilege by the person who occupied the throne, was sufficient both in Greece and Rome to cause a revolt of the nobility, followed at first by a jealous limitation of kingly power, and afterwards by a complete abolition of the regal office. Even in Sparta, under the constitution which bears the venerable name of Lycurgus—that is, a constitution as old at least as 800 B.C.—the original power of the monarch was lopped in its branches and weakened at its root by the curious institution of the double kingship, standing in the same relation to the aristocracy of Lacedæmon that the double consulship did to the Roman patricians ; and notwithstanding the life-long tenure of office held by the military presidents of the Spartan House of Lords (for such the kings virtually were), there cannot be the slightest doubt that the real governing power of the Spartan, as of the Roman constitution in its most flourishing days, was the aristocracy, the *γερουσία*, or senate of the most influential of the old Doric nobility, who correspond exactly to the *βουλὴ*, or privy-council of the

kings, who appear in all the critical moments of the bloody struggle in the Iliad. It may be laid down, indeed, as a general proposition in politics, confirmed by the history of ancient Greece and Rome and modern England, that in the most healthy and vigorous condition of the social body, the spirit of the government, whatever the form be, is essentially aristocratic. The mass of the people in all countries are formed for being led, not for leading, and look for guidance in political as in other matters, to their natural social leaders, that is, to their aristocracy, whom they follow with perfect confidence, just as a ship's crew look to the pilot and the captain. In a simple and uncomplicated state of society the nobility are in fact always the representatives of the people ; and if, in the after growth of a nation, a state of things arises in which the liberties of the people and the rights of the aristocracy seem naturally opposed, and are habitually contrasted, this is explained by the selfish exclusiveness incidental to the decay of an old, and the restless pretentiousness belonging to the growth of a new aristocracy. What are called democratic movements are, in such cases, only violent exertions on the part of the masses of the people to put forward their new natural leaders, when the changing condition of society has left the original aristocracy in an isolated and unrepresentative position. Any other kind of democracy, founded on the idea that the people ever do, or ever can govern themselves, is a delusion, and when attempted to be realized always ends in the creation of an artificial aristocracy, who govern with scorpions, where the natural aristocracy had used whips. In Homer, such a democracy appears acting only on a single occasion, and that in such fashion as if it had been the design of the poet to hold up to ridicule all claims of self-government on the part of unorganized

masses—claims ever and anon put forth by politicians guided more by abstract ideas than by concrete facts. I allude to the meeting of the *ἀγορὰ*, or popular assembly, in the second book; a body which had its subordinate place in the polity of the heroic age, exactly as we find it afterwards in Sparta under the name of *ἐκκλησία*, giving its sanction to important decrees of the *γερουσία*,<sup>1</sup> but which certainly was not conceived by Homer as having any right to decide for itself independently of the advice of its natural leaders, any more than a jury in this country is allowed to decide an important question according to its fancy, without the direction of the presiding judge. So when Agamemnon foolishly, as it appears, had called on the mass of the army to decide on the important question of the continuance or the abandonment of the siege of Troy, the poet allows them to be led into a rash and inglorious decision by the democratic harangues of the most ill-favoured and foul-mouthed man in the Greek camp—a fellow with squinting eyes, bandy legs, hunching shoulders, meagre hair, and a head shorn of all manly breadth of brow, and running up steep into a shallow crown. The poet's profound conviction of the necessity of monarchy to good government, and the contemptible character of all men whose habit it is to speak evil of dignities, could not be more strongly manifested than in the disorderly scene which he has here depicted, and the ludicrous manner in which an end is put to the disturbance. One is reminded by it forcibly of a similar futile attempt at self-direction by an Ephesian mob, called together for alleged pious purposes by Demetrius, a silversmith, on which occasion, according to the narrative of the nineteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, “Some cried one thing, and

<sup>1</sup> Thucyd. i. 87.

some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together." On the plain of Troy the champion of popular rights is Thersites, a man whose name has become a world-wide designation for the most odious form of that combination of paltry envy, jealousy, malice, pretension, violence, and cowardice, of which the pure democratic soul is composed. When all the rest, after their first commotion was appeased, in obedience to the word or the weapon of Ulysses, had sat down in order and silence, Thersites still goes on screeching out his spite. But let us take the poet's own words, which are as follows:—

" Now all the rest in order form'd submiss and silent sate ;  
 Only Thersites lawless storm'd with never-ending prate,  
 Words, words he knew ; rash reckless words about him now he  
 flings,  
 Nor aught abates, but fiercely rates the Jove-descended kings ;  
 Content if he might laughter move with ribald jest : the most  
 Ill-favoured wight I ween was he of all the Grecian host.  
 With hideous squint the railer leer'd : on one foot he was lame ;  
 Forward before his narrow chest his hunching shoulders came ;  
 Slanting and sharp his forehead rose, with shreds of meagre hair ;  
 He to Laertes' godlike son a deadly hatred bare,  
 And to Achilles : Agamemnon now this railer seeks  
 And brays his harsh reproaches out ; but not the well-greaved  
 Greeks  
 Might love the man whose tongue defied the Jove-born king of  
 men ;  
 Thus clamouring loud Thersites cried to Agamemnon then :  
 O son of Atreus ! what new greed doth now thy rage inspire ?  
 Thy tents are full of copper bright : to glut thy heart's desire,  
 The fairest fair are still thy share ; and when our valour brings  
 A strong fort down, the best of all the prizes is the king's.  
 Or lusts thy heart for yellow gold, which, to redeem his boy,  
 Some horse-subduing father brings to thee from breezy Troy,

Whose son by me was captive led, or by some other hand  
 Of valiant Greek ? Or doth thy lust some damsel fair demand  
 In love with her to mingle ? O 'tis passing proper so,  
 That their own Greek king to the Greeks should bring more harm  
 than to the foe !  
 Soft-hearted Greeks, women, not men ! if truth may pierce your  
 ear,  
 Come sail with me across the sea, and leave this monarch here,  
 Alone in Troy to glean his joy, and to digest his prey,  
 When we who fight to swell his might are gone and far away !  
 The godlike son of Peleus' line, a better man by far,  
 He now defies, and takes the prize his brave hands won in war.  
 Soothly Achilles lacketh gall, and droops his princely wing,  
 Or this were the last of insults cast from the lips of this faithless  
 king !"

Thus the demagogue : but Ulysses immediately replies :—

“ Thersites, sense-confounding fool, thy mouth of fluent prate  
 Learn now to gag : against the kings this scurril talk abate !  
 I tell thee true, of all the crew from Greece to Troy that came,  
 Vilest art thou ! there breathes not one who owns a fouler fame !  
 Such a base mouth it well beseems with bitter froth to foam,  
 To point sharp stings against the kings, and talk of sailing home !  
 Fool ! the deep sea more danger hides than the shallow-sounding  
 shore.  
 Thou dost not know what weal or woe the Olympians have in  
 store  
 For the returning Greeks ; but here thou sittest and dost pour  
 'Gainst the Atridans floods of bile, because we honour most  
 Him who is shepherd of the flock, and first of all the host.  
 But mark me this, and the sure deed will follow what I say !  
 If I shall find thee fooling here, as thou hast fool'd to-day,  
 Another time, let not this head upon these shoulders stand,  
 Nor I, Telemachus' father, rule the rocky Ithacan land,  
 If I shall fail to strip the rage from thy ill-favour'd frame,  
 Cloak, coat, and vest, and to the gazing crowd unveil thy shame ;

Then send thee hence 'mid shouts immense, and many a well-earn'd blow,  
To vent thy wail with none avail, where the salt sea-waters flow !”

These are words with stings. But the Ithacan was too wise a man to waste eloquent breath on any person to whom a more direct and effectual argument could be applied. So the poet proceeds :—

“ He spoke : and o'er the craven's back his baton's weight severe  
He launch'd ; the railer shrank away ; forth flow'd the bitter  
tear

From his vext eye ; a bloody weal did on his back appear,  
Beneath the golden mace : he sat in pain and sore dismay,  
And look'd with a wilder'd silly look, and wiped the tear away.  
His plight the folk with pity saw, yet laugh'd with laughter loud ;  
Then one to his neighbour turn'd, and thus outspake amid the  
crowd :

O bravely ! bravely ! many a deed Laertes' godlike son  
In council, and in battle's need, of brave repute hath done !  
But now the chief his praise hath topp'd with the bravest deed  
of all,

When he this blatant babbler stopt that did so rudely brawl.  
Not soon, I ween, his tongue will dare a second time to encroach  
On the high worship of the kings with words of foul reproach.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus disappears from the stage the only advocate of a democratic form of government whom Homer indicates to exist in the Greek camp. In the Iliad he retires into obscurity to make way for men who do not fight with words ; only in the post-Homeric story of Quintus Smyrnaeus he appears again insulting Achilles for the chivalrous pity which he had shown over the dead body of the beautiful Amazon Penthesilea ; whereupon the hot Pelidan takes the life out of his windy body, as one would puncture a bladder,

<sup>1</sup> Iliad ii. 211-245.

with a smart blow of his weighty fist;<sup>1</sup> for a spear, more especially the spear of Achilles, were too noble an instrument to carve an exit for the soul of so base-blooded a caitiff.

We have now to talk of the key-stone of the arch of ancient Greek life, the religion of the Hellenes. Here we have to perform the delicate act of recognising the soul of good in things evil, and of reason in things unreasonable, in which the philosophic function of mind consists. We must avoid the vulgar error of taking literally the words of the poet, when he says of the heathen people generally that

“ Devils they adored for deities ;”

and looking behind the curtain, we must learn to know that even

“ Gay religions, full of pomp and gold,”

have their places apart, where sober thought and serious emotions are cultivated. That in the anthropomorphic theology of Homer Plato should have seen nothing but puerility and absurdity, and that the Fathers of the Christian Church, who stood in a polemical attitude to heathenism in its most corrupt and decadent form, should have seen in the polytheistic Pantheon only a delusive and dangerous glorification of the world, the devil, and the flesh, was quite natural. But our position is altogether different. We are not required to accept the Iliad and Odyssey as a Bible; therefore we have no need to argue with the author of them as if he were a theologian, or to fight with him as if he were the most pleasing, and for that very reason the most perilous, incarnation of the Evil One. We are in no danger of becoming polytheists, and so may be allowed to bestow a little innocent admiration on the good points of Homeric religion,

<sup>1</sup> *Quintus Smyrnaeus*, i. 741.

without being suspected of heterodoxy, or accused of infidelity. I say, therefore, that polytheism, as it appears in Homer--mark this qualification--is not only a very beautiful and a very pleasing type of theological faith, but also, in a moral and a religious point of view, is not without certain gracious influences, far more potent in practical life than a hasty conclusion from a superficial view of idolatry might incline us to believe. It is here, indeed, as in all other matters of popular judgment, things reputed bad are, on accurate examination, generally found to be considerably better than the vulgar estimate; while many things of fair reputation, on a more narrow inspection, reveal flaws which the broad light of their general excellence had concealed from the passing observer. The first good thing about Homeric theology, as indeed about all polytheism, appears to me to be that this form of belief acts beneficially upon the whole nature of man, and leaves no part of it unconsecrated or uncultivated. And not only are all the functions of a healthy human being sacred to the catholic-hearted polytheist, but all the parts of nature--earth, sky, and ocean, clear fountain and flowery field, corn-producing glebe and rain-distilling cloud. This I regard, taken broadly, and not made the ground of a logical system of materialism, as on the whole a healthy and ennobling philosophy of nature; at all events, far more satisfactory than that uninspired array of unreasoning forces and blind laws which we are now called upon sometimes to accept as a satisfactory surrogate for what pious ancients worshipped as divine.

“ The old Greek men, the old Greek men,  
No blinking fools were they ;  
But with a free and broad-eyed ken  
Look'd forth on glorious day.

They look'd on the sun in the cloudless sky,  
And they saw that his light was fair ;  
And they said that the round full-beaming eye  
Of a blazing god was there.  
They look'd on the vast-spread earth and saw  
The various-fashion'd forms with awe,  
Of green and buxom life,  
And said, ' In every moving form,  
With buoyant breath, and pulses warm,  
In flowery crowns and veined leaves,  
A goddess dwells whose bosom heaves  
With organizing strife.' "

If any man cannot see the piety of this view of things I am sorry for him ; but though he cannot share my sympathies, I can share his antipathies so far as to say that all polytheism, however beautiful and however richly various to the imagination, however innocent and even elevating to a pure mind, is, in a moral point of view, to the masses of men pregnant with seeds of peril, which cannot be prevented from growing up and bursting out into the rankest corruption, unless its essentially sensuous tendencies be checked by certain powerful counteracting influences. Among these influences, so far as the Greek people were concerned, may be mentioned a free and large intellectual culture, the special gift of God to Greece, freedom from the tyranny of a priestly caste, and a healthy and unfeverish state of society, such as to the Homeric age specially belonged, and above all, a recognition of a supreme controlling Providence, and a moral government of the world, in the person of Jove, the father of gods and men. Without this sovereign authority of Jove, polytheism in Olympus would have been only a vaster repetition of democracy on earth,—that is, a supermundane collision of infinite dissimilar and hostile forces, which could

have been the object of no assuring faith to sore-tried mortals, and the anchor of no tempest-tossed conscience. But with the supreme Jove we have order at once brought into the confusion. The minor gods may brawl and battle as they please ; one may shoot his pestilential arrows at the Greeks, while another shakes her Gorgonian ægis at the Trojans ; the poet and the pious old Greek heart know with assured faith that all this will pass away, like a squall on a Highland loch. Above all the thunder and rain, and dust and smoke, and fury of an atmosphere fretted with eager strife, and maddled with hostile spears, reigns the counsel of Jove—*Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή*—that is, translated into our language, Divine Providence—which with dark hand leads us surely through this strange embroglie of good and evil forces which we call life. Nor is Jove the steward of war only—the *ταμίας πολέμου*, as Homer loves to call him—he is the god of truth, the god of justice, and the god who protects the weak against the strong, and the meek against the violent. In each of these capacities the supreme king had epithets as familiar to the Greek conscience as the Ten Commandments are to a modern Christian. Does Solomon, in the impressive and beautiful prayer which he offered up at the consecration of the Temple, use these words :—“ If any man trespass against his neighbour, and an oath be laid upon him to cause him to swear, and the oath come before thine altar in this house : then hear thou in heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his head ; and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness”?<sup>1</sup>—the pious Greek no less knew that an act of untruthfulness in the relations of social life, of which truth is the bond, would expose him to the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings viii. 31, 32.

special wrath of *Zeus ὄρκιος*, and to the castigation of those dark-vested powers, the Furies, the special ministers of his wrath against perjured offenders. Does the royal Hebrew psalmist, while bowing before the awful majesty of Him who rideth upon the heavens, driving His enemies away like smoke before His face, delight in the same breath to set forth the Omnipotent as "a father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows in his holy habitation?"—Homer is not less forward to assure us that all suppliants and poor wandering houseless strangers come from Jove, who, in this mild aspect of his thunder-loving nature, is called *ξένιος* and *ἰκέτιος* by all his true worshippers, rejoicing that they are Greeks in this respect, and not Barbarians on the shores of the inhospitable Euxine.

It were foreign to the plan of these discourses to follow out in detail the exhibition of the practical parts of heathen piety as they appear in the Homeric pictures of daily life and in the general tone of Homer's morality. I shall only say, in a single word, that if we compare Homer with any great popular poet, such as Chaucer, Shakspeare, Goethe, Burns, or Walter Scott, in point of moral complexion he shows as fair and fresh a hue as any of them, and fewer blotches than most. What rank corruption lay in thickly-sown germs at the bottom of Hellenic, as of every form of polytheistic faith, a man must be a very superficial reader of Greek books not to know. A thick folio volume of strange uncomely commentary on St. Paul's first chapter to the Romans might be written by any well-read Hellenist who should have pleasure in that sort of work; but he certainly would not find his materials in Homer. The great national poet glorifies the national virtues, but does not patronize the national vices. Homer, indeed, is no preacher, neither a

a prophet nor the son of a prophet—men of his class never are ; he was no philosopher, no reformer, and shared generally in the current opinions and prejudices of his time ; his theology, in which the gods are minutely and curiously made after the likeness of men, is full of acts of puerility and baseness at which any child now may smile, and any man of English honour blush ; but though he could not, as a popular poet, shake himself free from inadequate views and unworthy materials, he never gave prominence, or even a side look of approbation, to what was bad. He belonged essentially to the class of noble minds, which nothing that defiles can approach. He wore his laurels cleanly, and never soiled them with the sweat of any ignoble conflict. He was one of those whom Virgil in vision saw in the Elysian fields with Orpheus, Linus, Musæus, the founders of sacred mysteries and the singers of pious hymns—

“ *Quique pii vates et Phœbo digna locuti.*”

I cannot agree with what appears to me in some few points the hyper-virginal sensibility of Gladstone,<sup>1</sup> when he says that there are certain passages in Homer which a moral bard would like to see expunged. Homer is never immoral ; he is only natural, he is merely not squeamish. He is simply a man of perfect physical and moral health, according to my judgment.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *Studies on Homer and the Homeric Age*. By the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone (1858), vol. ii. p. 464, referring to Iliad xxi. 130.

<sup>2</sup> The moral and religious element in Homer finds special prominence in my Notes. Some suggestive parallelisms

will be found in Duport's *Gnomologia*, Cantab. (1660), and in Bogan's *Homerus Hebraizans*, Oxon. (1678), where, however, there is much that is more curious than significant, not a little that is puerile, and a great deal that is absolutely worthless.

## DISSERTATION VI.

### THE UNITY OF THE ILIAD--THE WOLFIAN THEORY.

THE great literary question which falls to be discussed in the present chapter has been declared by Mr. Gladstone to have been "bolted to the bran." "For us, at least," he goes on to say, "the controversies that rose out of the Wolfian theory are all but dead, and to me it seems little better than lost time to revive them."<sup>1</sup> I should be most happy, if it were in my power to agree with this dictum of so able and eloquent a writer, with whose general foundation of Homeric studies, as set forth in his introductory chapter, the previous discussions will have shown that I in the main agree. The scholar who can content himself with this dictum will save himself from the task of sweating severely through many quarries of harsh erudition, and keep the wings of his intellect unentangled by many subtle tissues of ingenious but unsubstantial criticism; but he will not have done his duty thoroughly either to the venerable Hellenic records which he desires to appreciate, or to the spirit of the age in which he lives. The name of Wolf in connexion with Greek literature, and of Niebuhr in reference to Roman history, wear a significance that extends far beyond the particular spheres where their gigantic critical excavations were con-

<sup>1</sup> Vol. i. p. 4.

ducted. If the Wolfian theory with regard to the origin and composition of the Homeric poems be looked at beyond the surface, it will be found to underlie a great number of the most important literary, historical, and theological questions that stir the mind of England at the present hour. Like a great earthquake, the idea started in those masterly 'Prolegomena' is working potently even now in many far distant places, where no fair cities, and no old crazy dwellings have fallen to attest its force.<sup>1</sup> So far, therefore, from considering the discussion of the Wolfian theory at the present day as little better than lost time, I should say rather that whoever has not gone over with some serious care the great critical campaigns of Niebuhr and Wolf, does not know properly in what position the grand army of European scholars now stands, nor has he any means of estimating by what strategical move the next effective blow shall be delivered. I myself,

<sup>1</sup> The following extract from the *Prolegomena*, p. 156, will show how clearly Wolf foresaw the wide application to which his theory was destined; and those who are most intimately acquainted with the literary activity of the present day in the most cultivated countries of Europe, will be best able to testify how far the spirit of the Wolfian theory can be truly said to be dead for us now, or for any thinking man:—"Hæc quum ita sint, sub imperio Pisistratidarum Græcia primum vetera Carmina vatum mansuris monumentis consignari vidit. Tale inque ætatem sub incunabula litterarum et majoris cultus civilis apud se viderunt plures nationes, quarum comparatio accurate instituta iis, quæ hic disputamus, multum lucis affirre possit. Nam, ut duas obiter tangam, et inter se et Græcis omni parte dissimillimas,

constat inter doctos, in Germania nostra, quæ domestica bella et principum ducumque suorum gesta jam ante Tacitum Carminibus celebraverat, has primitias rudis ingenii a Carolo M. tandem collectas esse et libris mandatas; itemque Arabes non ante vii. sec. inconditam poësin priorum ætatum memoria propagatam collectionibus (*Divanis*) comprehendere cœpisse, ipsumque Coranum diversitate primorum textuum sinaliæ Homero fortunam fateri. Praeter hos et alios populos comparandi erunt Hebræi, apud quos litterarum et scribendorum librorum usus mihi quidem haud paullo recentior videtur, quam vulgo putatur, et minus adeo genuinum corpus scriptorum, præsertim antiquiorum. Se de his et Arabicis illis collectionibus viderint homines eruditi litteris Orientis."

after having conscientiously turned over this subject in my mind for more than twenty years, and read all that I could lay my hands on, remain firmly convinced that whatever defects are to be found in the works of Mure and Gladstone, as the most notable representatives of British opinion on Homeric matters, may be attributed to their ignoring, or not sufficiently appreciating, the truth that lies at the bottom of the Wolfian theory. For in all questions of this kind we must carefully distinguish between the root out of which an opinion grows, and the ramifications into which it spreads. A principle may be perfectly true, while its growth runs wild in unpruned license and tyrannous excess. And with regard to all ideas that have exercised a wide sovereignty for a season over thinking men, this will generally be found to be the case. It is not in the power of mere nonsense, however brilliant, to influence the world seriously even for a day. Where any extreme and paradoxical opinion—and all extreme opinions are paradoxes when strongly stated—has triumphed for a considerable period over well-educated intellects, the error lies not in the child whose beauty has been admired, but in the idol-worship which has been paid to it, and in the fond training by which it has been spoiled. I direct attention, therefore, specially to this famous doctrine, partly because the history of the rise and growth of every great intellectual agitation is interesting and instructive; partly because I consider that Wolf, in his 'Prolegomena,' ushered into the world, with the full authority of a master, some true ideas, without which the poetry of Homer can never be properly appreciated; and partly because I consider that those speculations can never be treated lightly by an English scholar, which at the present moment are exercising a strong influence on the intellect of Europe, both generally,

and specially with regard to the important question of literary history out of which they arose. A German scholar of mark and eminence, belonging to the present generation, has declared that the Wolfian theory is the very citadel and stronghold of all Homeric studies; and he himself is so strongly convinced of the truth of Wolf's views, that he publicly declares the belief in the unity of the Iliad, generally held by English scholars, to be a superstition, from the influence of which the European mind has happily now recovered.<sup>1</sup> And not only so, but even in sober judicious England, where it is sometimes sufficient to throw discredit on any opinion to say that it is of German origin, we find that one of the most influential historians of ancient Greece has, in his great work, given extensive currency to a theory with regard to the composition of the Iliad, which, however original it may have been in his mind, and however distinctly it may contrast with the extreme ballad treatment of Lachmann, Köchly, and other Germans, is nevertheless only a particular form of the Wolfian theory, probably that very form which Wolf himself would have sketched out as the most legitimate application of his principles.<sup>2</sup> Besides, they who treat this affair as

<sup>1</sup> "Ipsa horum studiorum quasi arx, quæ questionem continet de poetica aut universæ Iliadis atque Odyssæ, aut singulorum utriusque carminum unitate atque virtute.

"Itaque assentientes me habiturum spero omnes, Nitzschii beneficio, ut tandem aliquando illam de poetica Iliadis unitate superstitionem tanquam victimam sperare possimus."—Köchly, *Dissertationes Iliad.* iii. p. 4.

Quite in harmony with this, though strikingly exceptive as an expression of opinion on this side the Channel, is the declaration of a distinguished En-

glish scholar in the *North British Review*, June 1865, p. 277. "Wolf's views have been continually gaining ground, and as Nitzsch himself before his death became a convert (?), we may safely say that no scholar will again find himself able to embrace the unitarian hypothesis."

<sup>2</sup> The following passage, p. 118 of the *Prolegomena*, distinctly states the principle of Mr. Grote's division of Homer's poems into an Achilleid and an Iliad properly so called: "In Iliade nondum deposita sunt certamina virorum doctorum de rerum capite et argu-

a mere passing outbreak of German extravagance, forget that as neology in religious thinking was originally imported into Germany from the great English freethinkers, so the literary scepticism with regard to Homer, forged into a thunderbolt by Wolf, was first flung out here as a random missile by a man who knew how to put more weight into a pin than other men could into a nail. I mean the great Cambridge critic, Richard Bentley, whom the Germans justly reverence as one of the first and greatest masters of that learned art of estimating ancient records, in which they are now such proficients.<sup>1</sup> Nor England only, but Italy also and France, have had their share in the origination of these notions, which evidently must have had their rise in some widely-spread European tendency of thought, and are by no means to be regarded in the light of a purely German crotchet, such as every Leipzig Fair brings forth by the score, for the ephemeral admiration of scholars without sense, and thinkers without substance.<sup>2</sup>

mento primario. De quo utcunque existimabitur, et ut sensus προεκθέσεως longissime patent (quippe suffecissent illi aliquot preliorum absente Achille factorum descriptiones): nunquam tamen certis argumentis docebitur, septem illos versus quidquam ultra promittere quam xviii. rhapsodias. Relique non iram Achillis in Agamemnonem et Græcos continent, sed novam, a priore longe diversam minimeque illis gravem, id est ejus iræ, quam solam isti versus designant appendicem. Quodsi omnia Græcorum ad Trojam gesta omnesque rhapsodias uni proposito subjicias, ad gloriam quidem Achillis magis quam aliis cuiusquam Græci aut Trojani herois tota Ilias, ad memorem iram ejus major tantum pars spectat; ut admodum mireris, quod in nullo codice adhuc pro isto exordio hoc vel aliud melius inventum sit:

ΚΥΔΟΣ ἀειδε, θεά, Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος,  
ὅσθ' εἰς βασιλῆη κοτεσσάμενος ἐπὶ νησὶ  
κέντο, Ἀχαιοῖσιν τε καὶ αὐτῷ ἄλγε ἔδωκεν,  
αὐτῷρ ἀνιστάμενος Τρωσιν καὶ Ἐπτορὶ δίο.

Subabsurdum foret, talem diligentiam subtiliorem esse dicere quam pro Homericu sæculo: nec id dicere ausint ii, quibus προέκθεσις Odysseæ ab ipso Homero præposita videatur: fäcèrent enim illum adeo infantem, ut quam artem primus ingeniosissime quæsi-  
visset, vel prudens certe ex natura et ordine fabule cepisset, eam ne agnoscere quidem et verbis exprimere potuerit."

<sup>1</sup> Lachmann considered Bentley "the greatest critic of modern times."—Herz, *Life of Lachmann*, p. 190.

<sup>2</sup> The curious enunciations of Wol-

I have said Wolf was far from being singular in his views ; he was only singular in the combined massiveness and elegance with which he stated them. I do not mean, however, by this in any way to deny the entire originality of the growth of his theory in his own mind. Except in so far as every man is influenced more or less by the spirit of the age in which he lives,—a spirit whose pervading power often causes the eruption of a great idea in several independent places at the same time,—except in this necessary regard, I do not find that he was under direct obligations to any preceding thinker, either in Germany or elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> This will be evident to every one who looks into his character and career, of which, as of by far the greatest name in the history of Homeric criticism since the days of Aristarchus, it appears only proper here to give a short sketch.

Frederick Augustus Wolf was born in 1759, the same year with Porson, Schiller, and Robert Burns. His father was a country schoolmaster at Nordhausen, a small Prussian town to the south of the Harz mountains in Saxony ; and from him he received that sound education in hard intellectual work and frugal habits which what are called better opportunities often fail to impart, and which has sent forth many of the most useful members of society in Scotland as well as in Germany. In his boyish learning he was remarkably precocious, and his precocity, instead of receiving a check, was rather unwisely stimulated by the eager purpose of his father to make his son a much greater scholar, and a more

fianism before Wolf, will be more conveniently brought forward below, after Wolf's own views have been fully stated.

<sup>1</sup> He said of himself, " When I was thirteen, I was a complete man "

(Körte, p. 36), that is, he could trace back the germs of all that he afterwards became to that period. He grew early and strongly out of himself, and was conscious of no powerful foreign influence.

distinguished man than himself. At the age of eighteen he went as a student of Philology to Göttingen, well prepared for profiting by the learned prelections of such men as Heyne and Michaelis, not only with much more than the requisite stock of Latin and Greek, which is a very different thing in Germany from what it is either in Scotland or England, but with French and Italian and English, which he had picked up from the Director of Music in Nordhausen. He had himself also, like most Germans, a genius for music, and could write verses; but his principal faculty seems to have been an enormous power of reading, backed by great concentration, and a most tenacious memory, little inferior to Porson's. Having been from his earliest years thrown very much on his own resources, he was not fortunate enough in Göttingen to find any one among the professors who could exercise any permanent controlling influence over his studies. Heyne certainly, the then emperor of the German philological world, did not at all satisfy his needs. The grace and intelligence and large human discursiveness with which that great man redeemed German scholarship from the pedantry of thorny grammarians on the one side, and the superficiality of mere literary tasters on the other, were not to be denied; but Wolf wanted something more—he wanted severe, massive, and closely-jointed critical masonry; and this is what Heyne, in his Homeric lectures, in the year 1777, does not seem to have presented. At Göttingen, accordingly, as at Nordhausen, Wolf chiefly taught himself. After going through the usual curriculum he was appointed teacher in the public school at Ilfeld in Hanover, and from thence speedily transferred to Osterode, a small town in the jaws of the Harz mountains, towards Göttingen. In both these situations he discovered a remarkable aptitude for teaching, and his fame both as a

teacher and a scholar grew so rapidly that in the year 1783 he was transferred to Halle, as professor of classical literature in that university. Here, on a small salary,<sup>1</sup> but with large views and a lofty purpose, he commenced his work of raising Philology from a subordinate position to that commanding ground of a comprehensive human interest, and philosophical significance, of which expository theologians, word-splitting grammarians, and elegant retail dealers in classical quotation, had never dreamt. His career as an academical teacher in Halle, lasting, as it did, for twenty years, in the very prime and flush of his life, makes a notable epoch in the history of learning in the most learned country of Europe. The influence exercised on the rising intellect of Germany by the universal erudition, flashing wit, impulsive eloquence, and genial disposition of Wolf, has perhaps no equal in the history of education. The contrast which this brilliant career of educational activity in the great German professor presents to Porson's condition, who at that very time was wasting his splendid talents in the cider-cellars of London, is explained by one of those anomalies in our insular habits, of which Oxford and Cambridge preserve not the least curious collection. Wolf, in fact, was a born teacher, and he had the good fortune to live in a country which knew how to use one. As an author, like Bentley, the materials which his long diligence had collected bore no proportion to the use which he made of them ; like Porson, he was rather averse to composition ; and, like Plato, he expressed an opinion that a speaking man was a much more effective instrument of conveying ideas than a dumb book.

<sup>1</sup> 300 dollars, about £45 per annum. "In Prussia," his friend Forster remarked, "it is the practice to give to learned men an ass's work and a wren's meat."—Kürte, pp. 104-107.

So far as Europe knows him in a printed form, he is the author of but one book, the recension of Homer which bears his name, with the accompanying Preface and Prolegomena. His peculiar opinions with regard to the origin and character of the Homeric poems had been conceived by him, and even put into a publishable shape, at a very early period of his career;<sup>1</sup> but they were not brought to maturity till the publication of Villoison's Homer in the year 1788, containing the critical marks of the great Alexandrian scholars, opened up new and rich veins of research to all who felt a special interest in the text of the old Greek minstrel. With the materials thus supplied he found himself in a condition to put forth his new recension of Homer at Halle in the year 1794, followed by the Prolegomena in 1795. The principle on which this recension proceeded, viz., that no satisfactory text of Homer can be produced from a mere comparison of existing editions and manuscripts, but that a scientific sifting must be made of the materials contained in the Venetian Scholia, and a clear verdict pronounced on the critical operations to which the text was submitted by the Alexandrian scholars—this principle, along with the thorough manner in which the difficult task was executed, struck the world of European scholars as with an electric shock. But it was not scholars only whom this critical thunderbolt smote with strange admiration or apprehension. Beyond Aristarchus and beyond Pisistratus, into the very workshop of old Pelasgic minstrelsy, Wolf cast his bold majestic look, and promulgated a theory with regard to the framework of the book which we now call the Iliad, directly in the teeth of all which reverential respect had for centuries received from venerable tradition as the orthodox truth in the matter. The

<sup>1</sup> Körte, vol. i. pp. 65, 74.

and the world were drawn into a perfine paradox, learned and the learned, and the ignorant, in their chairs, and even the most learned of all, were beneath their thrones. A hand, like a serpent, clasped the white arm clasped the black arm, and the black arm clasped the white arm, and the reeling dome was the head of the Philistines. Such was the condition of the world. The spiritual heresy exerted among the most learned men in Europe, was propagated by the sympathy of the most learned men in the world, and original thinkers both spiritual and material, the world over, presented. Goethe, Coleridge, and Fichte were among the converts to his views. A man of such magnitude, as you all have been stated with such power that they will only be dealt with by powerful men, and the greatness of them was acknowledged by most of them, as a giant that had shown himself in the world to supersede the lions of Scylla. By his Homeric art, as W. H. D. Allingham has told me to Europe what Bentley told the world in Fable; I often his prostration of Boyle and the other English scientists. He was Hellenic dictator; and a conqueror of science as much more potent than the English as H. H. was a more significant name than Falstaff.

After the publication of his Homer the rest of Wolf's tale is soon told. The French embroilment with Prussia, culminating in the battle of Jena in 1806, caused his removal to Berlin, where in the University, founded a year or two afterwards, a new, and as it appeared a more influential sphere of activity, was opened up to the audacious scholar. But at Berlin, to the astonishment and sorrow of all his friends, he did not shine as at Halle; in fact, according to all accounts, he proved a great failure; neither as an author nor as a teacher does he seem to have done any work after his

removal to the Prussian metropolis worthy of his fame. The cause of this, all seem to agree, lay principally in himself. Like Bentley, he suffered under the characteristic vice of strong minds, an incapacity to subordinate himself to weaker ones. He would not bow to circumstances ; he must be all, or nothing. Of a kingly intellect, like other kings he was given to be imperious, and when thwarted liable to become quarrelsome. He quarrelled with his wife ; he quarrelled with the Prussian Government ; and in his Homeric theory he quarrelled with universal Hellenic tradition, and with general European sentiment. The consequence was that he would not fit into the educational machinery of Berlin ; he would do nothing that he was bid ; he would do only what he chose to do. The moral lesson of his later years is therefore more notable than his intellectual achievements. But with all his faults he left a great school behind him, a school which is even now blossoming and bearing rich fruit both in his own country and in other parts of Europe. His scholars have collected numerous notes of his spoken lectures, and quote his opinions as reverently as Boswell did Johnson's. He died on the 14th April 1824, in Marseilles, where he had gone to recruit his health ; there his body lies buried : but he shares this honour with John Calvin and John Knox, that no man can lay his hand certainly upon the sod which covers his remains.<sup>1</sup>

I will now give a short abstract of the Wolfian theory, following as closely as possible the sequence of his argument in the 'Prolegomena.'

<sup>1</sup> My authorities for the facts in the above sketch of Wolf's life are—(1.) *Leben und Studien F. A. Wolf's* (1833). By his son in-law, Körte. (2.) *F. A. Wolf in seinem Verhältnisse zum Schulwesen.* By Arnoldt (1861). I have also read with great pleasure an able article in the *North British Review*, June 1865, on Wolf, attributed to the Rev. Mark Pattison, Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford, one of the authors of the famous *Essays and Reviews*.

literary saloons were shaken by a profane paradox, learned editors began to sit uncomfortably in their chairs, and even bishops felt a tremulous earthquake beneath their thrones. A Samson had suddenly started up, whose arm clasped the pillars of all erudite tradition, and the reeling dome was about to fall on the head of the Philistines. Such was the commotion that Wolf's sceptical heresy excited among the fearful; but he was amply compensated by the sympathy which he received from powerful and original thinkers both within and without the academical precincts. Goethe, Coleridge, and Flaxman were among the converts to his views. Accepted or not accepted, his opinions had been stated with such power that they could only be dealt with by powerful men; and the promulgator of them was acknowledged the most formidable gladiator that had shown himself in the world of books since the days of Scaliger. By his Homeric criticism Wolf had suddenly become to Europe what Bentley found himself in England after his prostration of Boyle and the Christ Church fraternity. He was Hellenic dictator; and a dictator for the nonce as much more potent than the Englishman, as Homer was a more significant name than Phalaris.

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removal to the Prussian metropolis worthy of his fame. The cause of this, all seem to agree, lay principally in himself. Like Bentley, he suffered under the characteristic vice of strong minds, an incapacity to subordinate himself to weaker ones. He would not bow to circumstances ; he must be all, or nothing. Of a kingly intellect, like other kings he was given to be imperious, and when thwarted liable to become quarrelsome. He quarrelled with his wife ; he quarrelled with the Prussian Government ; and in his Homeric theory he quarrelled with universal Hellenic tradition, and with general European sentiment. The consequence was that he would not fit into the educational machinery of Berlin ; he would do nothing that he was bid ; he would do only what he chose to do. The moral lesson of his later years is therefore more notable than his intellectual achievements. But with all his faults he left a great school behind him, a school which is even now blossoming and bearing rich fruit both in his own country and in other parts of Europe. His scholars have collected numerous notes of his spoken lectures, and quote his opinions as reverently as Boswell did Johnson's. He died on the 14th April 1824, in Marseilles, where he had gone to recruit his health ; there his body lies buried : but he shares this honour with John Calvin and John Knox, that no man can lay his hand certainly upon the sod which covers his remains.<sup>1</sup>

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That Homer is an *ῳδός* or minstrel, in the proper sense of the word, and not a literary poet, is a truth, however often forgotten in Homeric criticism, so evident, not only on the face of the Homeric poems themselves, but in the whole history of all intellectual nations, that special proof may be spared. If anybody thinks that it is somehow degrading to the greatest of all epic poets to imagine him without pen and ink in his hand, he ought to learn to bow to undoubted fact, in the first place, before indulging his fancies, and then he ought to consider that paper and books are so far from being necessary to the healthy action of the human mind, that, as Plato argues in the 'Phædrus,' they have often rather hindered that action, and more frequently weakened memory than strengthened it.<sup>1</sup> Besides, we may justly maintain that as those Egyptian sailors had more merit who circumnavigated Africa before the invention of the mariners' compass than can belong to us who use that instrument, so it is rather to the praise of Homer to say that he composed splendid verses without the aid of our modern literary appliances than with them. As to the historical fact, there is not the slightest proof that the Greeks used writing in the days of Homer. Of the origin of that art indeed they knew nothing; lies, of course, in their fertile fashion, they could invent enough; but of Cadmus as a historical character they knew as little as of Palamedes, to whom not Euripides only, but grave historians, attribute the invention of letters, with as much confidence as Herodotus attributes it to the Phœnicians.<sup>2</sup> The Cadmean letters which the Greek historian saw in the Temple of the Apollo at Thebes, prove nothing about the age of Cadmus, nor even about his connexion with the Greek alphabet, for nowhere was there a larger field for literary

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, p. 60, note.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Annal.* xi. 14: Herod. v. 58.

forgery than in the inscriptions on Greek temples, and letters might have been called Cadmean by the Theban priests merely because they were not cut quite in the modern fashion. But the works of Homer supply the most satisfactory proof that he neither wrote himself, nor knew anything of such an art. The supposed references to that art in the Iliad, when critically examined, are utterly worthless, and it is not to be supposed that, had letters been in common use in the days of Homer, he should have systematically abstained from any mention of an invention so closely interwoven with the every-day commerce of human life. But even supposing the invention of letters in Greece to have been as old as Cadmus, and Cadmus to be as old as artificial constructive chronologers would make him, this will be very far from helping Homer to the modern use of pen and ink. Those who have observed how very slow and far between are the successive steps in the discovery and progress of the arts of human life, will understand that the invention of an alphabet is one thing, and its application to literature and the art of making books another and widely different thing. Judging by such analogies as history affords, it would require at least six hundred years to make writing general after letters were invented. We know, indeed, as a historical fact, that the Greek alphabet, as we now have it, was of the most slow and gradual growth, not having been completed till the year 403 B.C., in the archonship of Euclid.<sup>1</sup> The difficulty of getting proper materials for writing on in the early ages, would alone prevent the art, whenever invented, from becoming at first of extensive application. The notices which we have of Solon's wooden tablets, and of the old edition of Hesiod's 'Works and Days' on leaden tablets, which Pausanias saw

<sup>1</sup> Harpocrate, *Ἄττικά γράμματα*.

at Ascra, sufficiently indicate the materials on which early Greek inscriptions were written ;<sup>1</sup> for books most certainly in those early ages they had none. For what would have been the use of books to a people who never read ? To write songs which they had never known but as sung by living men, would, to the contemporaries of Phemius and Demodocus, have appeared as a cold, heartless attempt to destroy them, and to rob them of their breath of life. In fact, even as to laws, and other grave public notices beyond the sphere of the wandering minstrel, we have the most undoubted statement from the Greeks themselves that written statutes were utterly unknown in Greece till the age of Zaleucus, that is, about seventy years before the time of Solon,<sup>2</sup> and though Solon himself, about 600 years B.C., was not only a legislator but a poet, there was in fact no authorship, in our sense of the word, in Greece till the age of the Persian wars. This was the date of the birth of prose in the Greek language ; and the whole history of popular civilisation in all countries proves that the general use of writing, as a medium of intellectual currency, is coeval with the existence of prose, while it is utterly foreign from the genius of those early ages, in which verse is the only organ of popular entertainment and instruction. In those times, poetry was not propagated from generation to generation in a dead written book, but through the living mouths of a class of public singers and reciters, called rhapsodists,<sup>3</sup> a word to which, in later Greece, as to the word *σοφιστής*, an unfavourable meaning was attached, but which originally denoted a most respectable class of men, as

<sup>1</sup> Plut. *Vit. Sol.* 25; Pausan. ix. 31. Pind. *Nem.* ii. 1; Herod. v. 67, with Bachr's note; Xen. *Conviv.* iii. 6;

<sup>2</sup> Strabo vi. 259.

<sup>3</sup> On the Rhapsodists, see Schol. edit. 1862.

Bernhardy, *Griech. Litt.* i. p. 217; Grote, Part i. c. 21, vol. i. p. 523, of

necessary to the intellectual culture of their age as orators, critics, and preachers to future stages of civilisation. In these men the cultivation of memory was necessarily the great art by which they practised their profession and gained their livelihood ; and this necessity will explain to the modern reader the preservation of long poems, through memory alone, in an age when writing was either entirely unknown, or known only as a means of perpetuating short public inscriptions on metal, wood, or stone. Nothing is more fallacious than the practice of measuring the intellectual capacities of men in the early stages of culture, by the feats of which we, in a more advanced state of civilisation, are capable. With all our culture, the mere savage is, in some respects, before us ; he has a quicker eye and a more vivid imagination ; and, in the living power of ready memory, all nations, before the invention of writing, largely surpassed themselves in their after-stage of a purely literary culture. But though there was nothing to hinder the rhapsodists from handing down from generation to generation long poems consisting of several cantos, it was a method of transmission particularly liable to corrupting influences ; and to such influences, doubtless, we owe the extensive interpolations in the Homeric text, which will never fail to reveal themselves to the sharp inspection of an intelligent criticism. But more than this, the whole fashion and habit of hearing poems sung or recited in those early times, renders the idea impossible that any such long poems as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* should ever have been composed. The memory of some individual poet might perhaps have been equal even to this feat ; but as there was no demand in the age for any such exhibition of mnemonic power, it is absurd to suppose that it ever should have been called forth. Men do not make boats too large for the water that

is to float them, nor compose tragedies of twenty acts when they know that people will with difficulty listen to five. Homer therefore simply did not write those two large poems which now pass under his name, in their present shape and to their present extent, and that because the age to which he belonged would not have known what to make of them ; and further, because it is extremely improbable that even his genius should have been equal to such a stupendous feat. If common sense and a quick practical instinct have ever been a distinguishing quality of the highest class of poets, as distinguished from mere blowers of imaginative soap-bubbles, Homer, as a practical man, could never dream of attempting what, if achieved, could be of no use to the men in whose service he spent his life. As for the unity of the Iliad, on which Aristotle has descended so learnedly, and which so many consider so irrefragable a proof of the presence of one mind through its whole structure, this unity, though unquestionably, in a certain sense, existing, lies in the very nature of the subject much more than in the genius of the poet. If any man were to collect the ballads now current in Britain about Robin Hood,<sup>1</sup> or the traditions of the life of Sir William Wallace, or other popular hero, he would find that there is a unity in such themes that grows up spontaneously in the popular mind, and which requires no genius of a first-class poet to produce it. Besides, whatever Aristotle may have said, it is he only who has said it, and imposed artificial laws on our modern judgments ; for the fact is that the Greeks generally did not recognise that strict unity of plan in the Iliad which the Stagirite so highly lauds, and they found the actual contents of the poem much wider than the plan

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Carlyle informed me that [ man.—who actually performed the part he knew the bookseller—a Yorkshire. ] of Pisistratus to these ballads.

announced in the exordium requires.<sup>1</sup> In fact, that people, with all their wonderful intellectual feats, knew nothing of works executed with a strict consciousness of literary unity till the time of Xenophon ; and as to the Iliad, in spite of the much be-praised unity, there are in it not a few staring gaps—“*eminentes et hiantes commissurae*”—which betray the hand of an unskilful joiner ; and if these clumsy sutures have not always been readily allowed by students of Homer, but rather studiously concealed, it is because the transcendental admiration of a great genius has prevented men from seeing the truth, and because all men at all times are much more inclined to put incoherent things together than to break up into separate parts an already existing coherency. Of these flaws in the structure of the poem, the reappearance of Pylæmenes after he is dead (xiii. 658, and v. 576), and the whole passage in Iliad xviii. from ver. 356 to 368, are glaring examples. And of this, to a certain extent at least, inorganic structure of the poem, as we now have it, the account of its early history as given by the Greeks themselves is a complete confirmation. For, so far from asserting the existence of one or two large poems possessed of organic unity from the earliest times, they do in express terms declare the contrary. Thus Aelian says : “The poems of Homer were sung by the ancients originally in separate parts ; and it was only after a long time that Lycurgus brought the whole body of the Homeric poetry with him to Sparta on his return from Ionia. In later times, Pisistratus made a collection of the rhapsodies, and published the Iliad and the Odyssey in their present shape.” The same account is given by Cicero for

<sup>1</sup> “Consentient enim omnes Grammatici in Iliade contineri gesta Graecorum et Trojanorum ad Ilium, et, si quid addunt, fortia facta Achillis” (*Prolegomena*, p. 123) ; certainly a much more wide and less organic scheme than the mere *wrath of Achilles*.

the Romans, and by Josephus as the representative of the literary Jews. The former says: "*Pisistratus qui primus Homeri libros confusos antea sic disposuisse dicitur ut nunc habemus.*" The latter writes: "They say that Homer himself committed nothing to writing, but that his poetry, taken down from the songs of the rhapsodists, was afterwards arranged in its present shape; and this is the reason why the existing texts present so many discrepancies."<sup>1</sup> Whether, therefore, we take internal evidence, the analogy of early popular literature, or the express testimony of all instructed ancients, we have the same result. In the Iliad we possess a collection of old ballads about the Trojan war, composed, it may be, in great part originally by some highly-gifted minstrel of the heroic age, called Homer, but which certainly received their present shape, as two large distinct poems, from the literary men attached to the court of Pisistratus. Their organic unity is a dream.

In bringing forward these bold opinions with regard to the origin and history of the Homeric poems, the great German philologer was perfectly conscious that he would be regarded by many as a dangerous revolutionary innovator in the critical world. He therefore took care to fortify himself with great names and reputable precedents, fearing the charge of singularity more than he courted the praise of originality, and warning all who might dispute his conclusions that they would have to do battle, not with a single German professor, but with some of the greatest thinkers and scholars that Europe had produced. At the head of these, as we mentioned above, stood the stout Englishman, Richard Bentley,

<sup>1</sup> *Ael. Var. Hist.* xiii. 13; *Cic. De* Plato, *Hipparch.* 228 B, and *Schol.*  
*Orat.* iii. 34; *Joseph. C. Apion.* i. 2, *Ven.* in *Iliad* x. init.; and *Eustath.*  
with which compare *Pausan.* vii. 26; *Commentary Iliad* init.

whose remarkable words we now give : "To prove Homer's universal knowledge, it has been said that he designed his poems for eternity to please and instruct mankind ; but take my word for it, poor Homer, in those early times and circumstances, had no such aspiring thoughts. He wrote a sequel of songs and rhapsodies, to be sung by himself for small earnings and good cheer at festivals and other days of merriment ; the Iliad he made for the men, and the Odyssey for the other sex."<sup>1</sup> Now this dictum, when narrowly examined, does perhaps not go so far as the *Kleinlieder-Theorie*, championed so valiantly with critical lance and tomahawk by Lachmann and the other German doctors of the ultra-Wolfian school ; but it plainly asserts the grand distinctive principle of Wolf himself, and is evidently flung out with a full conviction in the mind of that masculine scholar that the sequel of songs and rhapsodies which Homer sung belongs to a category of poetry altogether different from the lofty epic poem which Milton wrote, and which must be judged by a very different standard. Not less noteworthy are the words of Robert Wood, in his 'Essay on the Original Genius and Writings of Homer,' published in the year 1775, a work which, though not coming from a professed scholar, is distinguished by a plain, honest, unpretending manner, a great amount of good sense, a freshness of view, and a direct appeal from conventional traditions to nature, which will ever secure to it an honourable place on the shelves of Homeric scholars.<sup>2</sup> In page 278 of the original edition, this gentleman, after discussing the subject at some length, concludes : -

<sup>1</sup> *Remarks on a late Discourse on Free-thinking — Works*, by Dyce, vol. iii. p. 304.

<sup>2</sup> Wolf, in the *Prolegomena*, p. 40, celebrates "Woodii ingeniosa audacia."

“ Diogenes Laertius attributes the merit of this performance to Solon ; Cicero gives it to Pisistratus, and Plato to Hipparchus ; and they may possibly have been all concerned in it. But there would have been no occasion for each of these persons to have sought so diligently for the parts of these poems, and to have arranged them so carefully, if there had been a complete copy. If, therefore, the Spartan lawgiver and the other personages committed to writing, and introduced into Greece, what had been before only sung by the rhapsodists of Ionia--just as some curious fragments of ancient poetry have been lately collected in the northern parts of this island —their reduction to order in Greece was a work of taste and judgment ; and those great names which we have mentioned might claim the same merit in regard to Homer that the ingenious editor of Fingal is entitled to from Ossian.”

So much for the English origination of the Wolfian theory : the continental harbingers are given below.<sup>1</sup>

(1.) Isaac Casaubon, *Note in Diog. Laert.* edit. 1593, p. 114 :—“ Si verum est quod Josephus ait, Homerum sua poemata scripta non reliquisse, sed διαμημονευόμενα multo post scripta fuisse, non video quomodo satis emendata possint ea haberi, vel si antiquissimos habeamus codices; siquidem verisimile est non paulo aliter ea fuisse scripta, ac essent ab ipso composita.”

(2.) Paolo Beni, in his *Comparazione di Homero, Virgilio e Torquato*, Padova, 1607, states the Wolfian theory at full length, though he does not approve of it. “ Queste cose dunque fanno, Signori, che l’Odissea (come hò detto) non meno che l’Iliade manchi di unità di favola, o che almeno si riconosca difficilmente. Poiché quello che scrivono alcuni e col testimonio di Eliano cercano di confermare, che cioè avanti Pisistrato, il quale senza dubbio nacque molti anni anzi secoli dopo Homero, non si trovassero ne dell’Iliade ne dell’Odissea se non alcune parti.

I quali disgiunte e sparse s’andassero divolgando e cantando per le Grecia, e che in somma Pisistrato fosse il primo che ponendole insieme, l’Iliade e l’Odissea ne formasse, non voglio io che mi vaglia al presente, perciòche sebene quindi si darebbe l’ultimo colpo alla detta unità tanto dell’Iliade quanto dell’Odissea, anzi si mostrerebbe che ad Homero ne anco potè cader nell’ animo pensiero alcuno di unità, tuttavia a confessarne il vero ciò a me non par verisimile in modo alcuno.”

(3.) Giovanni Battista Vico, in his *Scienza Nuova*, published at Naples in 1725, has these words:—“ Tutte queste cose, dico, ora ci strascinano ad affermare, che tale sia addivenuto di Omero appunto, quale della *Guerra Trojana*, che quantunque ella dia una famosa epoca de’ tempi alla Storia, pur i Critici più avveduti giudicano, che quella non mai siesi stata fatta nel Mondo. E certamente se, come della *Guerra Trojana*, così di Omero non fussero certi

The reader has now before him a succinct but complete statement of this famous critical doctrine as put forth by its author. In judging of its merits, two parts of the case must be carefully kept asunder: the first part, which relates to the manner and the conditions under which these famous poems were originally composed, preserved, and circulated; and the second part, which relates to the character of the two great poems as we now have them, and the conditions under which they are said to have arisen. In regard to the first part, Wolf is in the main right; in regard to the second, in my judgment, he is almost altogether wrong. The first part contains two important propositions, to which more or less of truth belongs in their application to all early popular literature as well as to Homer. These propositions are: *First*, That the materials of the

*grandi vestigi rimasti quanti sono i di lui Poemi; a tante difficultà si direbbe, che Omero fusse stato un Poeta d'idea, il quale non fu particolar uomo in natura. Ma tali, e tante difficultà, e insiememente i Poemi di lui pervenutici sembrano farci cotal forza d'affermarlo per la metà: che quest' Omera sia egli stato un' Idea, ovvero un Carattere Eroico d'uomini greci, in quanto essi narravano cantando le loro storie.*"—Edit. 1801, vol. iii. p. 32. This is quite the German theory. Homer is not Homer, but an idea; every body, and therefore nobody.

(4.) De Motte, in his *Discourse on Homer* (Œuvres, vol. xvii. page 2), knew the theory, but did not approve of it any more than Beni.

(5.) Perrault, *Parallèle des Anciennes et Modernes* (Amsterdam, 1693), vol. iii. p. 35.

(6.) F. Hodelin d'Aubignac, in his *Conjectures Académiques, ou Dissertation sur l'Iliade*, 1715.

(7.) Rousseau sur *l'Origine des Langues* (Œuvres, Genev. 1782, vol. xvi. p. 240), quoted at length by Wolf, vol. i. p. 90:—"Quoiqu'on nous dise de l'invention de l'alphabet Grec, je la crois beaucoup plus moderne qu'on ne la fait, et je fonde principalement cette opinion sur le caractère de la langue. Il n'est venu bien souvent dans l'esprit de douter non-seulement qu'Homère n'eût écrit: mais même qu'on écrivît de son temps. J'ai grand regret, que ce doute soit si formellement démenti par l'histoire de Bellerophon dans l'Iliade. Comme j'ai le malheur aussi bien que le P. Hardouin d'être un peu obstiné dans mes paradoxes, si j'étois moins ignorant, je serois bien tenté d'étendre mes doutes sur cette histoire même, et de l'accuser d'avoir été sans beaucoup d'examen interpolée par les compilateurs d'Homère. Non-seulement dans le reste de l'Iliade on voit peu de traces de cet art: (ne miraris, quod pauca vestigia dicit esse, quæ

earliest Hellenic literature were short narrative poems, sung and not read, having a unity in the national history and in the popular consciousness, rather than from the design of a great poet. *Second*, That the chief way in which they were circulated and preserved in the earliest times was by the living memory of a body of men, the minstrels and rhapsodists, whose profession it was to entertain and instruct the public by those poems. These two propositions, of the utmost importance in the appreciation of all early literature, when thus broadly stated, it is impossible to deny; and to have brought them thus prominently forward, and with such authority as to have made them henceforward a living pos-

*nulla sunt; ita loquuntur, qui non certi sunt sententiae suæ:)* mais j'ose avancer que toute l'Odyssée n'est qu'un tissu de bêtises et d'inépties qu'une lettre ou deux eussent réduit en fumée, au lieu qu'on rend ce poème raisonnable et même assez bien conduit, en supposant que ses héros aient ignoré l'écriture. Si l'Iliade eût été écrite, elle eût été beaucoup moins chantée, les Rhapsodes eussent été moins recherchés et se seroient moins multipliés. Aucun autre Poète n'a été ainsi chanté si ce n'est le Tasse à Venise: encore n'est-ce que par les Gondoliers qui ne sont pas grands lecteurs. Les Poèmes d'Homère restèrent long-tems écrits seulement dans la mémoire des hommes; ils furent rassemblés par écrit assez tard et avec beaucoup de peine. Ce fut quand la Grèce commença d'abonder en livres et en poésie écrite, que tout le charme de celle d'Homère se fit sentir par comparaison. Les autres Poètes écrivoient, Homère seul avoit chanté, et ces chants divins n'ont cessé d'être écoutés avec ravissement que quand l'Eu-

rope s'est convertie de barbares, qui se sont mêlés de juger ce qu'ils ne pouvoient sentir."

(8) Merian, *Comment les Sciences influent dans la Poésie*, in the Memoirs of the Berlin Academy, 1774, p. 456. In the main this writer is quite right: his principal object being to dispel the notion that Homer was a man of science and literature of the same class as Dante and Milton. He quotes Wood, and asserts broadly (p. 484) Wolf's doctrine that the Greeks had no alphabet in Homer's time, and that the poet could neither read nor write; but believes him to have been a person, an *daōdōs* who eclipsed all the *daōdōs* of his own and the previous ages. In p. xli. of the *Prolegomena*, Wolf expresses his approbation of this essay.

(9) Zoega, *Abhandlungen*; published by Welcker, 1817. The Abhandlung on Homer, p. 306, written in 1788, contains the Wolfian theory at full length. Zoega held these opinions as early as 1779. Compare Welcker's *Ep.* (yc. p. 131, note.

session of the literary consciousness of Europe, is the great and undoubted merit of Wolf. The fundamental fact of the Wolfian theory, with regard to the materials of the Hellenic epic, and the great currency of separate popular ballads out of which they were composed, was announced before in the chapter on the Epic Cycle, and needs no inculcation here. Such materials are found everywhere, in Servia equally as in the Scottish Highlands, and cannot be excluded from Greece. The manner of their treatment and public use by minstrels, as contrasted with literary poets, is also sufficiently attested by the early habits of all known nations. So much, therefore, the stanchest advocate of old opinions must concede to the great innovator Wolf. Many marvellous feats of invention, formerly attributed by learned critics to the genius of the poet, must now fall back into the floating mass of popular tradition, of which the poet only availed himself. To talk of invention in the case of Homer, to the extent that, before Wolf, most Homeric critics were in the habit of doing, is to ignore the primary conditions under which all popular poetry grows up. Homer could no more invent Agamemnon than he could invent Jupiter. His position in reference to his materials was entirely parallel to that of a modern preacher in reference to the Old and New Testaments. That the Christian Scriptures happen to be printed does not alter the case. An unprinted tradition can as little be disowned by a great popular teacher as a printed one. But if the separate materials existed in the popular currency before Homer, the bond by which they were connected, we must allow, existed also to a certain extent. It is quite true that the traditions about such popular heroes as Wallace, and Bruce, and Robin Hood, exist in the popular mind with a sort of epic unity already, which the poet who uses them has no

need to create. Goethe found it so with regard to 'Faust'; and we may therefore admit with perfect safety that not only the separate materials, but the general scheme of the Iliad, existed in the Hellenic mind before Homer; so that there is no improbability in supposing that the bond, when lost, might have been recovered by men of knowledge and taste, as the coadjutors of Pisistratus may be presumed to have been. As to the second proposition, which refers to the method by which the early narrative poems were preserved and circulated, it seems in the general case equally undeniable, though demanding a certain limitation in its application to Homer and Greek literature. This limitation is in reference to the date of the invention of letters among that people. That letters were introduced from Phoenicia, under the dynasty of the early kings of the wealthy Orchomenus in Boeotia, long before Homer or even Agamemnon was heard of, may be accepted as a historical fact, certified not only by the earliest and most consistent Greek tradition, but in harmony with all that is now most certainly known of the history of civilisation on the shores of the Mediterranean. If the recent discoveries of the Egyptologists have forced our writers of ancient history to revise their chronology, and our theologians to show a little more deference to the Septuagint than had been their practice; and if, in obedience to these researches, we must now place Menes, the first king of Egypt, at least a thousand years further back than his previous conjectural date, the prehistoric civilisation of the Hellenes may be allowed to march a century or two backwards, not only without offence, but hand in hand with all historical consistency. We may say, therefore, that, so far as the knowledge of letters is concerned, there existed in the year 900 B.C. no presumptive hindrance, at least, to the pre-

servation of such long poems as the Iliad and the Odyssey.<sup>1</sup> But though Wolf certainly, as Merian did before him, treats too lightly the tradition of the Greeks with regard to Cadmus—the mythic position of whose name seems to me of itself sufficient to prove a knowledge of letters in Greece some centuries before the age of Homer—still there is nothing, either in the early history of Greek literature or in the Homeric poems themselves, which should lead us to suppose that writing was any part of the appliances by which these poems were composed or preserved. The age which these poems reflect, and the habit of mind exhibited by their author, dissuade us from obtruding on their peculiar world the special furniture and machinery which belong to literary productions in an age of books. We act more wisely, therefore, and more in harmony with the whole spirit of the Homeric poems, if we put writing altogether out of the question, when considering either their creation or their preservation. Man is not naturally a writing or a reading animal, and does in no way require the aid of parchment, whether to marshal in fair order his armies of bright conceptions, or to stereotype them for the use of future ages. The living memory of persons whose profession it is to exercise that faculty, and in an age when memory is regularly trained to perform what may appear to us marvellous feats, —because we have accustomed ourselves slavishly to connect the exercise of our faculties with written or printed paper —the living memory of professional minstrels is amply

<sup>1</sup> On the early use of letters in Greece, Babylonia, Phoenicia, and Egypt, see —(1.) Franz, *Elementa Epigraphices Graecae* (Berlin, 1840; chap. iv, *de aetate scripture*), who puts the case very strongly against Wolf. (2.) Dun- cker, *Geschichte des Alterthums*, vol. iii. p. 397, and vol. i. p. 128. (3.) Clinton, vol. i. Introd. p. xi. note. (4.) Grote, vol. ii. edit. 1846, p. 59. (5.) Bunsen's *Egypt*, English, 1848, vol. i. p. 96.

sufficient for both these purposes. Even in modern times, when the systematic cultivation of the memory is much neglected, instances are constantly occurring of the spontaneous exercise of memory, more than sufficient to explain the great part which it performed in early times, when this wonderful faculty was systematically and persistently drilled by great bodies of priests and poets, actuated by motives of professional duty and corporate interest. Dr. Henry Bathurst, Bishop of Norwich, whom Dr. Chalmers visited in his ninetieth year, had a particularly retentive memory. When a boy at Westminster school he could repeat *memoriter* the whole of the Iliad in the original Greek.<sup>1</sup> Of Thomas Forrest the martyr, commonly called the Vicar of Dollar, it is recorded that he committed three chapters of the Bible to memory every day, and made his servant hear him repeat them at night.<sup>2</sup> With these facts before us, we can have no difficulty in accepting Wolf's proposition that poems of considerable length could be composed and preserved among the Greek people at an early age without the aid of writing; nay, we may go much further, and believe, without the slightest embarrassment, that even such long continuous narratives as the Iliad and the Odyssey might have been composed without the aid of writing, and faithfully preserved by a school of professional minstrels, as the Chian brotherhood of Homerids, who cherished the memory of their great head with a religious reverence. Only by throwing back the use of letters several centuries beyond Wolf, we may at the same time, with perfect consistency, believe that, after having been freely composed by living mental power solely, and freely sung at many assemblies and festive meet-

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Hanna's *Life of Chalmers*, vol. iii. p. 402. | <sup>2</sup> M'Crie's *Life of Knox*. Edin. 1855. Note II, p. 313.

ings in various parts of Greece, they were set down in writing for preservation, possibly by the great minstrel himself, by way of entertainment to his old age, or more probably by the school of singers who, according to the Greek tradition, received the inheritance of his name and of his songs.<sup>1</sup> So far an unprejudiced mind can follow the great German philologer with cordial sympathy, adopting his facts and his principles in the main, without necessarily accepting all his conclusions; but when we approach the second part of his argument, and are called upon to receive as a historical fact the manufacture of the Iliad in its present shape, by certain literary joiners and dovetailers in the age of Pisistratus—somewhat in the same fashion that Macpherson manufactured Ossian (as indeed Wood in all simplicity says)—then we stumble on a conclusion for which we are in nowise prepared; and before this be granted, spectacled erudition and critical ingenuity will have to fight a battle with poetic instinct and healthy human feeling and common sense, of which the result may be by no means certain.<sup>2</sup> The issue of this contest will depend principally on the actual discovery of those unsightly gaps and clumsy joinings which the sharp eyes of Wolf himself, with the microscopic inspections of Hermann, Heyne, Lachmann, Köchly, and other Germans, boast to have discovered everywhere in what to Aristotle appeared the very compact and well-jointed framework of the Iliad. But before proceeding to examine the work of those famous dissec-tors in detail, we may allow the poetic instinct and the

<sup>1</sup> See below on the Homeridæ of Chios, Dissertation ix.

<sup>2</sup> Remittendi sunt homines, in hujusmodi controversiis, ad simplices animorum suorum sensus. Provocandum, | ut ita dicam, ad populum, missis paucorum nobilium commentis. Recordandum, qua quisque fuerit sententia, cum primum attentius Homerica perlegerit.—Keble, *Prælect. Acad. Oxon.* 1844, p. 83.

common sense of unlearned men to state their own view of the essential unity of the Iliad, drawn simply from the presentation of that great poem itself, as it affects the imaginative faculty. I shall endeavour, therefore, now to set down, in a few sentences, the general scheme of the Iliad, the leading divisions of its plot, and the gradual, wisely-calculated march of its catastrophe, as the whole in its broad points strikes the imagination of a healthy-minded reader.

With regard to the design of his great song Homer has left us in no doubt. He sings the wrath of Achilles; that is, how Achilles, the great Thessalian captain, strove with Agamemnon, the king of the wealth-abounding Mycenæ, and the commander-in-chief of the Greek host; how by that quarrel, and the consequent retirement of the offended chief from the warfare, the besieging army was so weakened, that they were driven back to their ships, and in danger of being driven into the sea; till at last the moody chief is induced to relent, the tide of war turns, and the Greek host rolls furiously on over the dead body of the great champion of Troy, with the thunders of favouring Jove above sounding fearfully the overture to the fall of the city of Priam. Such is the simple and yet great scheme of the Iliad; but there is room enough, even in this simple eventful act and its consequences, for the most vivid, the most fervid poetry; and besides, as Tasso in his great poem had in his eye not only the actual liberation of the holy city, but the complete military pomp and Christian significance of the Crusades, so it was no doubt a secondary object of Homer, in connexion with the personal quarrel of Achilles and Agamemnon, to give as broad and rich a view of the whole Trojan war as might be consistent with the size of his canvas and the due prominence of his hero. Or let us say, perhaps,

looking deeper, that the proper subject of the poem is the Trojan war; and the Thessalian captain was chosen by the poet to embody it, because his quarrel with the general-in-chief brought on the most critical moment of the contest, and his conduct at the moment presented the greatest number of dramatic situations. Now let us see shortly how this plan has been carried out in detail. There are twenty-four books in the Iliad. In the first of these the great quarrel breaks out; the second contains the marshalling of the host; in the third an attack takes place, and an attempt is made to settle the dispute in an old favourite chivalrous fashion, by single combat; but this attempt is rendered abortive by the interference of gods, not always curiously moral in their conduct, and the treachery of the Lycian Pandarus. The struggle is then renewed with various fortune; but, though Diomede, with the aid of Minerva, rides triumphant for a day over the field, prostrating both gods and men beneath his victorious spear, still nothing decisive is achieved, and at the end of the seventh book we find both parties occupying the battle-field, employed in the mournful duty of burying their dead, while Jove is lowering above with dark clouds and muttering thunders, which fill the hearts of the Greeks with yellow fear. In the eighth book, the king of gods and men, who had sworn to Thetis, after the quarrel, that her son should be amply revenged, now proceeds vigorously to execute his purpose; strictly forbids the gods to take any part in the battle; hangs out his fateful scales in the sky, and publicly decrees a decided preponderance to the Trojans. The decree is fulfilled. The Greeks are worsted; and affairs are now felt to be so critical, that the haughty monarch, feeling how vain it is to expect success sundered from the flashing sword of Achilles, sends an embassy to him, with ample

promise of amends for the injury done, and humble suit for reconciliation. His proposals are rejected. The hero remains in moody isolation, careless of the loss sustained by an army whose general had used his alliance only to rob him of his rights. The scene is then changed, and a short diversion made in favour of the Greeks, by a successful midnight expedition made into the Trojan camp by Diomede and Ulysses. Then further, if possible, to repair the Greek fortunes, and to prove that Argives may conquer without Achilles, the king of men himself comes forward, and does no unkingly deeds in the fray. But in vain. Jove is with Hector, and against Agamemnon. The king is wounded and carried off the field; so also Ulysses and Diomede; the Greeks, with their principal leaders unfit for fight, retire on all hands. The stout hand of Sarpedon pulls down the coping-stones of the Greek rampart, and the brand of Hector flings fire into their ships. This critical moment ends the twelfth book, and brings the reader exactly to the middle of the long poem. The decree of Jove is now manifestly being fulfilled. The lofty pride and indignant self-esteem of Achilles might well be satisfied. The Greeks must suffer, because they made him suffer; they cannot conquer without the man whom they had wronged. Nevertheless another desperate attempt is made to do without him. Neptune, ever the enemy of Troy, and boasting himself the equal of his brother Jove, restores the Trojan battle; Idomeneus of Crete makes his presence felt with all the effectiveness that ought to belong to a descendant of Minos; Juno borrows the wonder-working girdle of Venus, and charms therewith Jove into a deep sleep, so that he may for a season remain unaware of what Neptune is doing to contravene his plans upon the earth; and the huge-limbed Telamonian Ajax, with a pole in his hand, like a moving tower, defends the ship of Protesilaus from

the brand of Hector. But Jove can allow salvation to the Greeks only on condition that the son of Thetis return to the fray, gaining honour to himself and bringing safety to his country by a single step. But the son of Peleus is too proud to yield to the mere solicitation of Agamemnon, however urgent, and however often repeated. To bring this consummation about, the fine feeling of friendship is called in. Patroclus, the bosom-friend of Achilles, not able to prevail on the still inflexible hero to take up arms in person, borrows his armour, and, under this familiar guise of terror, works great devastation in the Trojan camp. But it is not the mere armour of Achilles that can appal Hector ; Patroclus is slain ; a terrible struggle takes place of a kind very common in Homer, for the possession of his dead body, and while this is with difficulty rescued from the fangs of Trojan spoilers, word is brought to Achilles that his friend is slain. His grief is uncontrollable. The sharp cries of his sorrow bring his divine mother forth from the depths of the sparry sea-caves to wail with him. She finds her son bent on returning to the battle, not that he may please Agamemnon, but that he may sacrifice Hector to the manes of his beloved friend ; and knowing his purpose to be inflexible, she prepares for the struggle, that in the long-run was to be no less fatal to him than to Hector, by procuring for him a suit of armour from the workshop of the Olympian smith. The description of this celestial armour, and especially of the beautiful shield, so often imitated by future poets, brings us to the end of the eighteenth book. The possession of the armour is followed by a public reconciliation with Agamemnon ; and the counsellor Jove, having now attained his immediate object in bringing honour to Achilles, is free to follow his great plan of helping the Greeks, and overthrowing the empire of Priam. The other gods now re-

ceive his free permission to mingle in the fray, according to their respective partialities. The twentieth book accordingly contains the battle of the gods. In the midst of it Achilles rages over the field, himself almost a god, and fearless of the opposition of gods. The river Scamander, groaning under heaps of slaughtered bodies, and rolling his crimsoned tide over the plain, rears his tumid crest against the fearless hero in vain; for the gods favour the brave, and Pallas Athena stirs up the god of fire to quench the perilous redundancy of the exasperated flood. These earth-shaking combats of gods and men, of fire and flood, occupy two books. In the twenty-second book the real catastrophe is achieved. Hector is slain by the hand of Achilles, and his dead body is dragged three times round the walls of Troy by the infuriated chief. What remains does not bring the action further, so far as the poet's plan is concerned—for the wrath of Achilles has now worked its perfect work,—but only adds two scenes, necessary to encircle the fierceness of these bloody struggles with the soft halo of love and pity.<sup>1</sup> The funeral games in honour of Patroclus are necessary, that it may be seen how a deep regard for Patroclus alone, and no weak succumbing to Agamemnon, has been the ruling motive of the hero in working out the catastrophe; while the last book, representing Hector's hoary-headed father travelling lonely through the mirksome night into the tent of his crimson-handed enemy, to ransom his son's body, manifestly has the effect of making us part with the hero in love rather than in terror, while we are made to feel that no thirst for revenge, however just, could excuse the barbarous

<sup>1</sup> With regard to the poetical necessity of the two last books, I am glad to see that Keble, a nice judge on

matters of poetic feeling, entirely agrees with me.—*Prelect.* vol. i. p. 116.

outrage on a dead body, and the cold disregard of the petition of an old man, a father and a king. Achilles weeps. And as before the catastrophe he not ignobly was reconciled to Agamemnon, so at the close are we still more nobly reconciled to him. Thus ends the Iliad.

Now, in reference to this fine old scene from the Trojan war, so dramatically conceived, and in most points so dramatically set forth, of which I have here sketched an outline, the common sense of men, whose cause I now state, does not necessarily assert that it is in all parts compacted together in the most cunning manner possible, or that no interpolation occurs in it, which one may confidently reject as not of a piece with the original workmanship. A thoughtful reader will be ready to make considerable allowances for probable interpolations in a popular work of such extent, perhaps not originally committed to writing by its author, and passing through so many hands in the course of many centuries. But what I say, and what the unsophisticated human instinct of every reader of the Iliad will say, is that, taking it as a whole, if anywhere among human compositions we have a grand imaginative plan, and a grandly consistent execution of that plan, we have them here; and these two things are of a kind which no sane man can believe to exist anywhere, except as the necessary product of the action of a great poetical genius.<sup>1</sup> "Some persons believe in twenty Homers," said glorious John Wilson in his own glorious way; "some persons believe in twenty Homers; I believe in one. Nature is not so lavish of her great poets."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The insurmountable obstacle to believing the Iliad a consolidated work of several parts is this,—that the work of great masters is unique; and the Iliad has a great master's genuine

stamp, and that stamp is the grand style"—Professor Arnold *on Translating Homer*, Lect. ii. p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> Wilson's *Critical Essays*, 'Homer

With the case for one great organic Iliad from one great organizing Homer thus fully before us, let us now proceed to examine what considerations the erudite and acute Germans have brought forward to contravene what appears to be the distinct verdict of common sense and healthy human feeling in the matter.

In the first place, let us ask more particularly what is the real amount of those literary services which Pisistratus and his grammarians are recorded to have performed to the poems of Homer. Wolf insists—and it is essential to his argument that he should insist—that the words of our authorities plainly imply, not a restoration of an original order that was lost, but the constitution of a connexion which never previously existed. Now, I must confess that this appears to me to be pressing the authorities too closely,—more like a lawyer insisting on the literal sense of his document than a plain man giving no more force to words than the circumstances of the case seem to require. If the expression used by Cicero, in the passage above quoted, with reference to the part played by Pisistratus in editing the Homeric poems, had been used by some Hebrew rabbi with regard to Ezra and the Old Testament Scriptures, which are a collection of entirely separate and independent works, the just sense of his words would certainly have been that the present order in which we read these books did not exist before the and his Translators,' vol. viii. of his Collected Works. To the high compliment paid by Gladstone (vol. i. p. 3) to these Homeric recreations of the poetical Professor, I most cordially subscribe. Altogether analogous to Wilson's conviction, as a poet, that he had a great poet before him in the Iliad, is the expression of Parker, the American rationalist, with regard to the essential verity of the character of Christ as presented in the Gospels—“*It would have taken a Jesus to forge a Jesus!*” So we may say, to forge such an Iliad as we now possess out of an aggregate of fragmentary disjointed ballads, Pisistratus would have required a Homer beside him as great as the original whom he was to counterfeit.

appearance of that zealous scribe ; probably that the books had never previously been presented to the Jews as an inspired whole. But in the case of the Iliad we start not with a collection of separate books, but with a series of songs or cantos, which on the general intellect make as plain an impression of unity as the books of Milton's ' Paradise Lost,' or the successive evolution of dramatic harmonies in the ' Creation' of Haydn. The natural meaning to put upon the word "*disposuisse*" in this case is, that the books of the Iliad, having for a long period been sung separately, as the necessities of popular entertainment required, and the original order having become disturbed, Pisistratus was the first who presented this great work of poetic genius to the Athenians in its integrity. It is as if the three different parts of Schiller's ' Wallenstein,' supposing them to have been produced in an age not familiar with our method of bookish presentation, had been acted on an itinerant stage for several centuries through Germany, and listened to by spectators altogether unwitting of their original unity, or at least unconcerned about it, and then suddenly the miraculous art of multiplying books by metallic types was discovered ; whereupon some imperial Frederick or Maximilian had set forth the three fragmentary dramas in the shape of one organic poem and one complete book ; in this case a modern historian writing in Latin might have used with propriety the identical language employed by Cicero with reference to Pisistratus. The same remarks apply to the *συναγαγὼν ἀπέφηνε* of Ælian and the *συντεθῆναι* of Josephus. One thing is quite certain, that the Greeks themselves, who were as familiar with this achievement of Pisistratus as we are with the history of Shakspeare's plays, never dreamt that it implied anything more than the meaning which is here put

upon it. That very Eustathius, who uses the same word as Josephus, in his mention of Pisistratus and his grammarians, says expressly in the previous sentence, the first in his great work, *ότι ἐν μὲν τι σῶμα συνεχὲς διόλου καὶ εὐάρμοστον ἡ τῆς Ἰλιάδος ποίησις*—that “the Iliad is one continuous poem, and well compacted in every part.”

But it is on the internal evidence supplied by the poems themselves that the Germans mainly rely for the force of that conviction with which the truth of the Wolfian theory, even far beyond the limits of its original conception, is impressed on their minds. And in handling this matter, we may willingly start with the admission that however common sense, healthy poetic instinct, and the general judging faculty of the great mass in literary matters may be entitled to be heard in this question, they have by no means an absolute right to deliver an authoritative verdict. As in a restored antique statue, there are flaws and incongruities which only the practised eye of a professed archæologist or sculptor can detect, so, in a large poem like the Iliad, there may exist “*eminentes et hiantes commissurae*” which shall force an impartial critic, however unwillingly, to decide that we have in this famous work, after all the admiration of centuries, only a piece of cunning patchwork, not more genuine as a whole than the ‘Fingal’ of Macpherson. This, as we have seen, was literally the opinion even of a plain honest Englishman, Robert Wood; we shall therefore consider it our duty to approach this examination with no tyrannous presumption in our minds against the sceptical side of the case. Let us learn to look truth in the face at all hazards, or go back to our nursery and read fairy tales. Should the worse issue triumph, we have always one consolation—that on which Schiller, who lived in the midst of all sorts of scepticism, fell piously back—

“ Immer zerreisset den Kranz des Homers, und zählet die Väter  
 Des vollendeten ewigen Werks !  
 Hat es doch eine Mutter nur, und die Züge der Mutter,  
 Deine unsterblichen Züge, Natur”—

“ Iliados patres fuerint quot, cum sit Homerus  
 Nullus, Germani garrula bella movent ;  
 Sed mater tamen una manet, certissima matris  
 Naturæ proles lineamenta refert.”

On the other hand, the Germans are altogether in the wrong, if they start, as I fear they too often do in this matter, with the presumption that they ought everywhere to find flaws in Homer, and that a want of original unity is to be supposed wherever the supposition is possible. To this perverse principle, secretly working in their minds, rather than openly confessed, must be attributed a great amount of that impertinent and illogical ingenuity which they have wasted on this theme.<sup>1</sup> That there is no presumption in the nature

<sup>1</sup> I give the following extract from a programme by Professor Schulze of the Stralsund Gymnasium (1862), at once to show that some of the Germans share my British notions on this much vexed question, and how very far the Wolfian theory may still be considered as dead among continental scholars, the writer being obliged formally to protest for his opinions as in a great minority:—“ Facile omnibus, qui legent, probatum iri puto, quod tantum de Iliade et Odyssaea egi; hæc enim carmina sola vere Homericæ dici posse mihi persuasum est. Cujus rei argumenta hic non afferam. Quum autem sententiam prorsus contrariam plerique, qui novissimis temporibus de Homero scripserunt, propositurus sim, nolim arrogantiæ insimulari. Sed vere dicam, quod sentio. Nec Wolfii, nec Lachmanni, nec eorum, qui hos secuti sunt, argumentationibus adducuntur, ut iis, quæ illis visa sunt, assentiar; sed quamquam multa subtiliter et acute disputaverunt, tamen rem non ab omni parte videntur satis ponderasse, et dum omne studium in eo posuerunt, ut, quod ab initio ipsis verum visum erat, demonstrarent, ea, quæ his repugnant, interdum parum curaverunt. Itaque cum multa sint, cur Homericæ carmina ex multis minoribus carminibus conjuncta videri possint, illi, non curantes, etiam esse, cur statim ab initio unum eorum corpus fuisse credamus, huic uni rei student, ut ea in singulas particulas dissolvant. Quamvis autem multa in iis inveniantur, quæ inter se discrepant, multo, tamen plura ejusmodi sunt, quæ et bene inter se cohærent et dictione simillima sint, nec a pluribus poetis proficiunt, nec diversis temporibus fingi

of the case, or in the history of early literature in Greece, against the production of a great organic poetic work such as the world has long believed that it possesses in the Iliad, we think we have sufficiently shown. How the numerous Wolfians beyond the Rhine should feel it so difficult to believe in the possibility of one original great Iliad from one original great Homer, when their great master recognises the “*admirabilis summa et compages*” of the Odyssey, a poem of similar style and amplitude belonging to the same age, I never have been able to understand. But however this be,—and some of them no doubt can pull the Odyssey to pieces just as cleverly as Lachmann has done the Iliad,<sup>1</sup>—we in Scotland and England are, I trust, prepared to try this great question with that unbiassed mind and judicial impartiality which alone can lead to an equitable decision.

potuerint. Mihi quidem illi, quæ argumentati sunt, non prius persuaderunt, quam *verisimile esse ostenderint*, et *plures simul poetas tam egregios in Græcia extitisse, ut omnis posteritas admiratione eorum teneretur, et tot poetas quasi pactione facta ejusmodi tractasse, quæ tam commode in duo corpora conjungi possent, ut novissimo demum tempore male conjuncta deprehenderentur*. Quum autem, nisi res aliqua satis mihi probata sit, non soleam aliorum hominum vel doctissimum auctoritatem sequi, nec in hac questione nomina terrent, nec magnus eorum consensus, qui nuper de his rebus scripserunt, nec fiducia, qua opiniones suas protulerunt, alia ratio ineunda mihi videtur, qua difficultates, quibus Homericæ questio laborat, tolli possint; et dum illi, ex multis singulis carminibus Iliadem et Odysseam conjunctas esse, ostendere conantur, ego probari posse dico, ex uno fonte omnia

fluxisse, postquam autem in disjunctos rivulos per aliquot sæcula diffusa fuerunt, vix demum Pisistratidarum opera factum esse, ut in duo illa corpora redirent. Nec tamen operam ab illis perditam dicimus; immo pleraque, quæ de mala carminum conditione investigaverunt, ejusmodi sunt, ut verius de poeta ejusque carminibus judicare licet; sed quid minutis illis carminibus, quæ invenerunt, faciant, ipsi videbunt, nobis quidem, si ea ad regulas poeticæ artis examinamus, nullius videbunt pretii esse. Nec verum est, omnem venustatem Homericæ poeseos in singularum partium pulchritudine positam esse, immo pleraque tantum ob id ipsum animos nostros et movent et delectant, quod snum in alterutro poemate locum occupant.”

<sup>1</sup> See *Die Homerische Odyssee und ihre Entstehung*, von Kirchhoff (Berlin, 1859); and other works of a similar disintegrating tendency.

The issue is contained in two words—unity and interpolation, or rather vamping. Now with regard to both these terms a preliminary caution is necessary. The unity into which we inquire is not that original unity of the parts of a historical tradition in the popular mind on which Wolf expatiates.<sup>1</sup> This sort of unity, as existing previous to, and entirely independent of Homer, both parties agree in admitting; at least from such an agreement I start most heartily, considering it one of the essential bases for a scientific discussion of the subject. But the unity which the sceptical doctors impugn is that fine coherence of parts, and that subtle delicacy of one presiding soul, which is felt and acknowledged in the great imaginative works of Milton, Michael Angelo, Tasso, and Shakspeare. This unity we presume to exist in the Iliad also, because the poem exists and makes an impression as one great whole on the general human eye; the burden of proof, therefore, lies with the objectors; and if they are to succeed they must do so, not by magnifying petty flaws and exaggerating trivial incongruities, but by the exhibition of those *eminentes et hiantes commissuræ* on which Wolf originally put his case. Nor will it be enough to prove that there are some, or not a few, manifest interpolations in the body of this great work, which mar its beauty in some places, and disturb its proportions. Such interpolations occur in every ancient work to a greater or less extent; and if they are found to exist in Homer, as, in truth, it would be miraculous if they did not, they will no more raise a special question in respect of that poet than the non-appearance of the story of the woman taken in adultery in the Vatican, Alexandrian, and other Codices, raises a question with regard to the genuineness of the Gospel of John. There is a

<sup>1</sup> *Proleg.* p. 119.

play of Euripides, the 'Iphigenia in Aulis,' in which many and great interpolations have with great probability been suspected both by German and English critics; but when these interpolations are all accepted in their greatest extent, the play remains a play, and Euripides as much the writer of it as before. In order to make out their case the Wolfians must bring forward interpolations of such an extensive character as altogether to break up the existing coherence of the poem, and induce a belief that, though a great poet composed some prominent parts of it, yet as a whole it is a piece of clumsy patchwork. This is the issue, in fact, which Lachmann and Köchly heroically accept, and upon such an issue only has the peculiar dissecting process of "the small-song theory" either significance or excuse.

In the logic of the Wolfian scholars there has always appeared to me to be one great defect. In judging of interpolations in Homer, we are not entitled to proceed with the same severity that might be proper in judging of an author of a later period. We must bear in mind the peculiar circumstances under which these poems were composed. If there was a great poem originally—which we assume in the first place till it be disproved—it was not a great poem constructed in the same way, or with the same views, that belonged to the productions of a Milton, a Virgil, or a Tasso in a literary age. Milton wrote his 'Paradise Lost' with the strong consciousness, and with the express purpose that it was to be read as a whole. Homer strung together his songs about the wrath of Achilles with the distinct knowledge that they would generally be used only in separate parts. Occasions there no doubt might be, as on the recurrence of great public festivals, when the whole series of the Achillean ballads in regular sequence was sung. Such seems

to be the meaning of a disputed passage<sup>1</sup> in Diogenes Laertius, in which mention is made of an ordinance of Solon, with regard to the public recitation of the Homeric poems in Athens by a company of rhapsodists. And if such public recitation or exhibition of the whole Iliad took place in Athens, whose civilisation was comparatively late, in the year 600 B.C., why not in precocious Ionia, 850 B.C., the well-known Herodotean date for Homer? But such occasions, though natural, would be rare; and a shrewd practical man like Homer—for no doubt, like Shakspeare, he had an eye for what lay before him, and was no mere fancy-monger—Homer, I say, who was a man of business, and had to do with the mass of the Greek people, composing his cantos mainly with a view to their effect when sung separately, might well be excused if he did not always use that curious art in the joining of the several parts, which composition under different conditions would have imposed. Like a wise architect, he would not be careful to expend any superfluous skill and decoration on those parts of the building which seldom or never met the public eye. That such were the conditions of his work the Wolfians themselves must admit; in saying so we only assume their premises. But if under these conditions a poem of any considerable size actually was produced—and this they do not absolutely deny, they only say that a poem *so very large* never was produced—then they are placed in a peculiarly disadvantageous position in the deductions which they make from any interpolations which they seem to discover. For under these circumstances, the legitimate deduction will not always be what they wish it to be—namely, that we have before us a patchwork of dif-

<sup>1</sup> Τά τε Ὀμήρου ἐξ ὑποβολῆς γέγραφε | ἐκεῖθεν δρχεσθαι τὸν ἔχθμενον.—Diog. ραψῳδεῖσθαι οἷον δικού δ πρῶτος Ἐληξεν, | Laert. Solon 9.

ferent authors,—but only that Homer, and for a very good reason, was not always so curious about the joinings of his work as a Tasso might be, or a Tennyson. Thus, after infinite torturing of numberless innocent passages of an old popular epic, after the most painful microscopic inspection of literary flaws invisible to common eyes, after large generation of every possible variety of erudite squinting and bookish ophthalmia, these curious investigators may find themselves not one foot nearer to their goal than when they started. But it is time to look at the objections themselves; and in doing so, we shall first take the two put prominently forward by Wolf in the 'Prolegomena,' and then select a few samples from Lachmann and Köchly, two of the most distinguished of his disciples. The instances adduced will only be a few—sufficient to illustrate the style of criticism pursued by that school. More detailed remarks will be found in the notes, and in the great work of Mure, by whom this part of the subject has been discussed with remarkable ability and completeness.

In the fifth book of the Iliad (ver. 576), when the Greeks are putting forth all their strength, with the special prominence of Diomedes, to prove that they can drive back the Trojans behind their walls without help from the moody Achilles, we are told that Menelaus slew with his spear Pylæmenes, king of the Paphlagonians, an ally of Priam. But in the thirteenth book, after a long interval, this trans-fixed monarch appears again on the stage, following with tears the dead body of his son Harpalion to burial, who had been slain by Merion, the squire of Diomedes. Now, there is a plain contradiction here, one of those contradictions indeed, than which none are more common in the manuscripts of ancient books, and of which we have a familiar

example in the allusion to a king in the last verse of Hannah's song of gratitude to the Lord in 1 Sam. ii 10, at a time when there was no king in Israel. Every case of this kind must be judged of by its own peculiarities ; and the first thing that strikes us here is the extreme triviality of the whole affair in reference to the general plot of the Iliad. The Paphlagonian king is not a character of any prominence or importance in the poem. Except once in the dry enumeration of the catalogue of the ships (Il. 851), and in the passage of the fifth book, where he is despatched without any noteworthy circumstance in four lines of the common place of all war ballads, he nowhere appears in the whole first twelve books of the Iliad. What wonder if the poet, amid the hundred and one similar deaths which he had to enumerate, merely to cover the epic battle-field with the proper number of slain (as the sea cannot look like the sea without a multitude of waves), had forgot the insignificant death of the father in the fifth book before he came to make his son die in the thirteenth, and thus fell into the impropriety of making a dead son be followed to the grave by the tears of a dead father ? This is one method of explaining a contradiction on a point of the smallest significance, to the palliating power of which Homer is much more entitled than Virgil, Dante, and others, who, as Mure shows, have so often stood in need of such apology. The wonder with me is, not that this small incongruity has been discovered in the Iliad, but that more of the same kind should not have existed. But considering the remarkable consistency which Homer generally observes, even in the most unimportant matters, I am rather inclined to explain the present instance by supposing that the original text as sung by Homer ended, XIII. 655--δεῦ δὲ γαῖαν—and that the following four

verses were added by some rhapsodist, who had the heroes of the catalogue fresh in his mind, but had forgotten, or never knew, the slight notice of the Paphlagonian monarch that occurs in the fifth book.<sup>1</sup>

The other passage which Wolf brings prominently forward in the 'Prolegomena,' is in Book XVIII., ver. 356-368, where, in passing from the last scenes of the combat for the possession of the dead body of Patroclus to the visit paid by Thetis to the fire-god to procure a suit of armour for her son, the poet introduces the following short dialogue between Jove and Juno on Olympus :—

“ And Jove his spouse and sister thus bespake :  
 So then, Imperial Juno ! not in vain  
 Thou hast the swift Achilles sought to rouse  
 Again to battle ; the Achaians, sure,  
 Are thy own children, thou hast borne them all.  
 To whom the awful Goddess ample-eyed :  
 What word hath pass'd thy lips, Jove, most severe ?  
 A man, though mortal merely, and to me  
 Inferior in device, might have achieved  
 That labour easily. Can I, who boast  
 Myself the Chief of Goddesses, and such  
 Not by birth only, but as thine espoused,  
 Who art thyself Sovereign of all the Gods,  
 Can I with anger burn against the house  
 Of Priam, and want means of just revenge ?  
 Thus they in heaven their mutual conference held.”

COWPER.

Now, if the reader will note this passage particularly in the connexion, and carefully consider the objections that have

<sup>1</sup> Damm's way of explaining the contradiction shows to what shifts a sensible man will be reduced who for which he has a great reverence :  
*“Nimirum anima patris insepulti etiam tum et nondum collecta ad inferos ad-  
 stebat caeso filio !”*

been made to it, not only by Wolf, Heyne, Köppen, and others in modern times, but by Zenodotus among the ancients (Schol. Ven., B)—for the Alexandrians also had microscopes—he will find that they amount to no more than this, that the old minstrel might have written a much more effective celestial colloquy, and perhaps have inserted it in a more suitable place. Of course, this is quite a different affair from a valid decision against its genuineness. But that it really is an interpolation may also be assumed by any person who thinks that its presence where it now stands is an ugly blot upon a fair page. My opinion is, that such questions of doubtful disputation should be altogether let alone; for no man at this time of day has any means of deciding them either on the one side of possibility or on the other. Homer may have nodded, or had a stomach-complaint—if the old Greeks ever had stomach-complaints—when he composed them; or some vulgar-minded rhapsodist may have sewed a beggar's patch here upon his purple robe; in either case the portentous conclusions of the Wolfian theory can never be made to stand, with any regard to logic, upon so slender a basis.

Let us now hear Lachmann. This distinguished scholar, to whom Christian Europe is indebted for her first complete emancipation from the shackles of the Greek Vulgate New Testament,<sup>1</sup> first conceived by Bentley, in his 'Considera-

<sup>1</sup> Charles Konrad Frederick William Lachmann—though, if judged only by his 'Considerations on the Iliad,' he might be mistaken for a minute pedant—was, taken as a whole, a man of large proportions, and, since he has given rise to more dissecting criticism of Homer than any modern scholar except Wolf, claims a short notice here. He was born at Brunswick, in the year 1793, his father being

a Lutheran clergyman there. From his earliest years he showed a decided predilection for the study of languages, and this not altogether in the receptive way, but his fine and subtle sensibility occasionally found expression in verse. His University studies were conducted at Göttingen and Leipzig. At the former seat of learning, the large and various, but somewhat inaccurate criticism of Heyne, did not suit his

tions about the *Iliad*,’ read before the Berlin Academy in the year 1837, displayed, or attempted to display, systematically, the clumsy joinings and sutures which Wolf had declared to exist in the *Iliad*, and resolved this great poem, piece by piece, into the original ballads of which it was made up. This method of procedure, as going a step beyond Wolf,<sup>1</sup> and leading to more detailed and definite results, has received the peculiar designation of the *Kleinlieder-Theorie*, or “Small-Song Theory;” and an idea of it may best be formed by

exact intellect, any more than it did Wolf’s, in Heyne’s more vigorous days. From the lucidity and subtle penetration of Dissen he learned more; but if he had any master in classical philology, it was Hermann. To Beneke in Göttingen he owed his first lessons in old German literature. After finishing his studies, in which he originally combined theology with philology, he relinquished the Church, and received swift promotion from the Prussian Government, always eager to secure men of the highest talent for the academical service, first as professor in Königsberg, then in Berlin. In this metropolis, along with Schleiermacher, Buttmann, Boeckh, and other well-known names, he soon became the centre of a very active association of energetic and enthusiastic scholars. His exertions in the learned world were principally confined to strictly critical work; but he was by no means a mere plodding collector of various readings, but a man of fine taste, sharp wit, far-reaching principle, and the most genial sympathies. In Stehely’s coffee-room, where he occupied a daily corner with his special friends, his lionine laugh echoed loud over all the din of the most choice gossipers of

the metropolis; and many were the pungent shafts which he there shot against Hegelians and *Schöngeister*, theologians and freethinkers, and all whom he honoured with his decided but not at all venomous hostility. Whatever he did was marked by accuracy and thoroughness, and the most entire originality. His great editions were *Propertius*, the *Niebelungen*, *Lucretius*, and the New Testament. He died prematurely at the age of fifty-eight, of gouty inflammation of the ankle, which, requiring an amputation of the foot, caused a fatal fever. The amount of severe and enduring work which he went through would have done honour to a life of double the length. These notes are taken from a *Life of Lachmann* by Martin Herz (Berlin, 1851), a work which British scholars who are anxious to trace the history of the most recent scholarship in Germany will find extremely interesting.

<sup>1</sup> “Wolf attacked the great out-works; Lachmann brought out his results altogether from within. Other critics exhibited individual interpolations; Lachmann dissected the whole *Iliad*.”—Herz, *Life of Lachmann*, p. 128.

exhibiting completely the author's treatment of the first book; for, in this part of his work, at least, if there was a great poet with a great poem in his head, the author would not be likely to insert anything that was not most closely connected with his plan; and here also, if there was originally no great poem, the Pisistratean man of letters who devised the unity which we now possess, would find it most difficult to preserve a perfect consistency with the mass of ballads which his critical craft was to organize. This book, as is well known, consists of four parts: the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles; the colloquy between Achilles and his mother Thetis; the conducting of Chryseis, under the charge of Ulysses, back to her father; and the visit of Thetis to Olympus to solicit the powerful aid of Jove in obtaining due honour from the Greeks to her injured son. In criticising this sequence of events, Lachmann first fastens on the phrase *ἐκ τοῦ*, "from that time," in verse 493, where the narrative passes from the voyage of Ulysses to the Olympian visit of Thetis—

'Αλλ' ὅτε δή ἐκ τοῦ δυωδεκάτη γένετ' ἡώς—

"But when from this the twelfth bright morn had risen."

This refers to a passage among the consoling words which, in the previous part of the book, the sea-goddess had spoken to her son, promising that she would go to Olympus to solicit Jove in his behalf, but could not do so immediately, because the Thunderer, and all the Olympians with him, had only yesterday gone to a sacred banquet of the pious Ethiopians, and would not return till the twelfth day. But the embassy of Ulysses, which commences at ver. 430, occupies at least a day and a night, and if we are to take ver. 490-3 strictly as part of the interval, perhaps several days; so that *ἐκ τοῦ* is

pian Jupiter in words, and yet to deliver a speech that for logical inference shall not stand the scrutiny of a youth performing his first analytic exercise in the logic class. So there may be some faults of strict intellectual sequence in some speeches of the *Iliad*, and yet Homer remain a great poet; just as St. Paul is unquestionably a great theologian, though, in the manner of his countrymen, he sometimes uses an allegory for an argument. Again: there may be some speeches in Homer not at all deficient, perhaps, in point of logic, but weak otherwise and ineffective. What follows? Is a man to cover whole walls, like the Venetian painters, with historical figures, and in every figure to be equally strong, never to flag, never to be languid? An exuberant genius will occasionally be careless, that is all; or it may be simply that a great genius knows that he cannot, and that he ought not, to be always great; a little flatness is beneficial here and there to make the emphatic points tell. Great writers have erred by too manifest an anxiety to be always saying notable things. Then, as to the resolving of any Homeric speech into scraps of phrases borrowed from other passages, this does appear to me to be, in reference to Homer at least, the most equivocal and slippery of all methods of critical procedure. For one of the great distinctions between a minstrel like Homer and a literary poet like Pope is precisely this, that while the latter studiously avoids repetition, and is curious of novelty in expression, the former, having once got the proper phrase, sticks to it, and repeats it as often as he may find occasion. For neither is his audience fastidious, nor does he present so much of himself at once as may produce a wearisome impression of sameness. Cases, no doubt, there may be, where an extreme inappropriateness of any passage, coupled with extreme commonplace in the

expression, may serve to indicate an interpolation from which a wise critic will gladly set his author free. But in Homer no one will be hasty to parade such a remedy; and for myself, I cannot say that Köchly's elaborate use of a Homeric concordance, to throw suspicion on the genuineness of any passage, has produced the slightest effect on my mind.

But wherein consists the alleged inconsistency in the conduct of Agamemnon in this place? It appears, certainly, that if Professor Köchly had written the second book instead of Homer, he would have presented the king of men in a much more kingly and majestic attitude. I believe that. The king of the gods, too, in this book plays a like unkingly part; he sends a lying dream, and Agamemnon makes a lying speech. Professor Köchly would not have done that. This is Homer's misfortune. He wrote his poem before German universities were known; and his minstrel head, with all its mass of brain, is full of many puerile fancies, both about gods and men, which are a stumblingblock to learned readers. I admit that it would have been far more dignified in the king of Mycenæ, after having spoken so haughtily of Achilles, to come forward and make a manly direct appeal to the Greeks to support him with double zeal, now that Achilles was gone, and show that the soldiers of the Peloponnesus did not require the spur of a hot young Thessalian captain to lead them to victory. But Homer either thought otherwise, or there was some old popular ballad representing the thing otherwise, which he could no more get rid of than Virgil could get rid of the Trojan horse.<sup>1</sup> The result is that

<sup>1</sup> This most important element in Homeric criticism was noted long ago by De la Motte:—"Il y avoit apparemment une tradition de la guerre de Troye, dont il a conservé les faits sans les accomoder scrupuleusement aux règles d'un art qui n'a été bien développé que depuis lui, quoi qu'il en soit le père."—*Oeuvres*, vol. ii. p. 40.

unkingly trick, that *πεῖρα*, or sounding of the popular mind by a false speech, in which even the admiring ancients found matter of offence.<sup>1</sup> The result is also, I think, that there is a certain want of logic in the king's speech ; for the argument beginning with verse 119—

“ Truly to us and to our sons this tale great shame shall be,”

viz., that we have been obliged to give up the war—would have been more suitable in an address advising them to remain, than in this, which exhorts them to flee. But the learned professor surely might have seen that a crooked man, or a man in a crooked position, could not be expected to make a straight speech. He was only pretending that he meant to embark, and flung out this appeal to their honour, with a view to prevent that very result which, notwithstanding his adroit appeal, actually took place. The Greeks, like Falstaff, thought they had got enough of honour ; and if the general was willing to give up the war, whether by fault of Jove, who was mentioned, or of Achilles, whom they might shrewdly suspect behind the mask, it was no business of theirs ; they had been nine years beating their heads against stone walls, camping amid the unhealthy swamps of the Scamander, and they were eager to see their wives.

The particular objections made by the learned German to different parts of this section of the Iliad I forbear to discuss, both to avoid prolixity, and because, if the general plan of the book be sustained, the special attacks lose their point. Two things I willingly grant, that the manner in which the professor has re-arranged these 483 lines, so as to present two distinct and separate appeals to the army, the one an

<sup>1</sup> ἀλογον τὸ πειράζειν εἰ γὰρ ἐτέρως | ἀπώλετο δι τάπα τὰ πράγματα.—  
ωστερ καὶ ἐγένετο, τὸ πλῆθος ἐνευσερ, | Schol. B. Ven.

exhortation to stand, and the other to flee, is extremely ingenious, and highly creditable to the constructive talent of the author; and further, that his theory of these two separate addresses having been cleverly or clumsily patched together by the literary adjutants of Pisistratus, may possibly be true. I see no absolute improbability in the matter. But, if scholarly criticism is to be anything more than ingenious conjecture, this concession will avail little. We who stand on the received text have the tradition of long centuries in our favour, and not one substantial reason against us. Possession, in literary as in civil matters, is eleven points of the law; and he who wishes to shake an old received document out of its consistency, must be prepared to bring something more weighty to bear against it than clever guesses and well-devised possibilities.

Let us now take a look at the second part of the second book,—the well-known catalogue of the ships. Here we have to do, not with Lachmann and Köchly only, but with Ottfried Müller, and Mommsen, and Nitzsch, and the whole massed phalanx of the German school.<sup>1</sup> It is quite certain also that the objections made to it are somewhat of a more serious character than those which we have been reviewing; and we may say further, with perfect security, that if all these 393 lines had been destroyed, though Greek archæology would have lost an important document, neither would Homer have been shorn of one ray of glory as a poet, nor the Iliad lost one jot of its completeness as a poem.<sup>2</sup> Like

<sup>1</sup> Müller, *Greek Literature*; Nitzsch, *Sagenpoesie*; Mommsen, *Philologus*; Köchly, *Dissert. de Catalogo* (Turici, 1853.)

<sup>2</sup> “Catalogum copiarum si non legeremus, philosophia artis, nihil puto

omissum, quereretur; forsitan adeo eam partem historici non poetæ esse docuisset, ridendumque esse qui hero- um notitiam absque eā mancam exi- timaret.”—Wolf, *Prol.* p. 128. To invent imaginary reasons for imaginary

certain buttons which tailors sometimes put upon coats, not necessary for fastening, being there they are a pleasant ornament,—not being there, they are not missed. In the first place, the catalogue stands in a peculiar position, as compared with other alleged interpolations, in reference to the presumptions with which we start. There is no presumption indeed that if a great poem on the Trojan war originally existed, such a document would not form part of it; but there is a very strong presumption that, whether existing originally as a separate poem, or as a part of a large epic, it was a document peculiarly liable to interpolation, and one which ought to be used for topographical and historical purposes with great caution. That the catalogue, however, originally formed no part of the Iliad, is a proposition which the Germans assume without proof, either because they believe in no Iliad at all, or because they have got into a habit of pulling all literary documents to pieces, as a sacrifice to a fixed idea, or an exercise of erudite ingenuity. They have agreed to perform the part of devil's advocate in canonization, and put themselves forward with a hawk-eyed eagerness to find flaws in all written tradition, or to make them. The catalogue certainly, on the face of it, has none of the usual marks of an interpolation. It stands in the poem exactly at that place where, according to the nature of the case and the propriety of composition, it ought to stand; and though it might be removed altogether, as we have just said, without organic injury to the poem, the most captious objector cannot say that as a whole it either retards the progress of the action, or disturbs the harmony of the com-

excellences, is, I fear, one of the most common occupations of that criticism which aspires to teach before it has sub- mitted to learn. And Doederlein (*Ilias*, 1863) says: "Haec Iliadis pars omnium consensu recentior est ceteris."

position. It is neither superfluous nor incongruous.<sup>1</sup> Then, as to its quality, though it certainly bears no particular evidence of Homeric genius, this arises from the nature of the subject, not from the presence of a different poet. Such pieces of prosaic detail necessarily occur in all long poems; and if a modern poet might prefer to avoid such a roll of rhymed statistics, the ancient bards, before the invention of prose and blue-books, had no choice. In those early times, as we had already occasion to remark,<sup>2</sup> whatever was thought worthy of preservation in the popular memory was put into a rhythmical form; and so, in the best ancient poems, many passages occur, which, if they were only shaken out of metre, could not be distinguished from prose. The objections taken to the catalogue therefore affect only a few special points, which appear to be inconsistent with other parts of the poem as it now stands. Of these points the following are the most prominent: "Agamemnon," says Müller, "according to II. 108, governs from Mycenæ the whole of Argos, that is, the neighbouring part of Peloponnesus and many islands;" according to the catalogue he governs no islands whatever, but, on the other hand, his kingdom comprises *Ægialeia*, which did not become Achæan till after the expulsion of the Ionians. And the special mention of Adrastus in ver. 572, as king of Sicyon, taken in connexion with the account given by Herodotus of the position of this very hero at the time of Cleisthenes,<sup>3</sup> supplies a historical motive sufficiently strong for the extension of Agamemnon's kingdom in this direction by some Argive rhapsodist. Again, Meges, the son of Phyleus, continues the same author, is in the catalogue king

<sup>1</sup> What De la Motte says of the catalogue is worth noting: "Il me paroit plus exact qu'ingénieux, et plus utile pour la suite, qu'agréable en lui-même."—*Œuvres*, vol. ii. p. 30. <sup>2</sup> P. 31. <sup>3</sup> Herod. v. 67, 68.

of Dulichium (Il. 625), in the Iliad (XIII. 692, xv. 519), king of the Epeans. But one of the grossest instances of interpolation in the catalogue is the well-known couplet (ver. 557-8) connecting Salamis with Athens—

Αἴας δ' ἐκ Σαλαμίνος ἄγεν δικαιόδεκα νῆσας  
στῆσε δ' ἄγων, ἵν' Ἀθηναίων ἵσταντο φάλαγγες.

with respect to which it was part of the common gossip of the ancients that the second line had been forged by Solon for a political purpose.<sup>1</sup> Not less striking is the un-Homeric character of those lines in the account of the Locrians (529-30), which the ancients rejected on the double ground that the Greeks are never called "**Ελλῆνες**" in Homier, but only Argives or Danai, or Achæans, and that they are always copper-mailed, and never wear a flaxen cuirass such as is here given to Ajax. But the most glaring indication of the foreign origin of the catalogue appears in the opening paragraph, where a prominence is given to Boeotia that does not belong to it in the Iliad, and which receives its natural explanation in the supposition that it was composed by a Boeotian rhapsodist who wished to give his country the place of honour in the expedition. Now, admitting all these inconsistencies as facts, to the full extent which those who put them forward desire, one cannot, without an extremely hasty logic, admit the conclusions which are drawn from them. For, in the first place, such a statistical roll must, in the nature of the case, be a piece of forced work with every great poet, and after having finished it from the documents before him, he is only too willing to fling it aside altogether, out of hand, out of memory, and may easily admit some allusions in the body of the work which are not strictly in harmony with

<sup>1</sup> Plut. *Vit. Sol.* 10.

his overture. And this would happen the more readily with a minstrel who, like Homer, seldom or never recited his own poem as a complete whole. But admitting that the presumptions in favour of interpolation, arising from national vanity, in this part of the poem, are so strong as to overwhelm every other consideration, the corruption of a part does not imply the foreign origin of the whole ; on the contrary, Solon, for instance, could have had no motive for his pious fraud in the line about Salamis, had not an Athenian paragraph previously existed in the catalogue, to which it might be attached. Then, as to the alleged Boeotian origin of the whole, we must observe that the prominence given to this part of Greece in the catalogue is justified both by the undoubted pre-eminence of the Boeotian kingdom of Orchomenus in those early times, and by the important fact that the thousand-masted armada, according to the Homeric version of the legend, sailed from a Boeotian harbour. It may also be that in its original form, a form, we may suppose, something like that meagre summation to which it has been brought back by the dexterous manipulation of Köchly, this piece of rhymed naval statistics had a Boeotian minstrel for its manufacturer, whose work was adopted by Homer, and with a few ornamental additions embodied in his great work. Most certain it is that some such register must have been floating about long before Homer's time, both in Boeotia and in the Troad,<sup>1</sup> for in those days such rhymed lists of dry facts were at once the newspaper, the blue-book, and the register office for all the public statistics of the nation ; and, if this was the case, Homer, who was a practical man, was not

<sup>1</sup> The remark in the text contains the reason why I cannot agree with Grote (vol. i. 537) in looking upon the catalogue as necessarily the part of a large composition. According to my view, it was originally the fractional record of a great action, not the fractional part of a great composition.

likely to give himself the trouble of doing a second time what had been done already, without the hope of reputation or profit for his pains. In every view, therefore, the Wolfian theory, applied to this second book, as to the first, breaks down. Special interpolations, as in the case of any other ancient record, may, nay ought, to be willingly allowed, and others may be reasonably suspected ; but it is not proved that the parts of the poem, as we now have it, hang inorganically together, so as to indicate a diverse authorship ; and the "mighty gaps and commissures" which the keen eye of Wolf fixed on, are after all only superficial scratches, and one or two small cracks, which neither shake the cohesion of the parts, nor annihilate the unity of the plan.

The above are, I think, a fair sample of the sort of objections which Wolf and his followers, now for more than half a century, have busied themselves with such erudite industry in advancing against the great national Epic of the Greeks ; and I feel convinced that every British reader will agree with me in attributing great part of this Titanic exhibition of fruitless learning to a peculiar vice in the German intellect, analogous to that curious professional subtlety so often observed in legal minds, which makes them incapable of dealing with broad questions, and of moving popular assemblies. Much learning has made them, not exactly mad, but super-subtle, curious, captious, and impracticable. They are like men, if we may imagine such, with microscopic eyes, who see the mites crawling so gigantically through the mass, that they lose all stomach for the cheese. They have trained themselves to such a habit of magnifying differences that they have lost all sense of likeness, and think they have explained the process by which a web was woven, when they have only discovered a few rents and exposed a few patches.

“ The Wolfian theory,” says Mr. Grote, “ explains the gaps and contradictions throughout the narration of the Iliad; but it explains nothing else.”<sup>1</sup> Exactly so. Just as atheism exposes what to us appear the contradictions in the plan of the universe, but leaves the plan itself altogether inexplicable. So Mrs. Browning says, and says well —

“ Wolf’s an atheist,  
And if the Iliad fell out as he says,  
By mere fortuitous concourse of old songs,  
We’ll guess as much too for the universe.”<sup>2</sup>

These lines we may well assume to express the general uncorrupted instinct of the English mind, in reference to the Wolfian theory in its extreme shape, as stated by Lachmann and his school. But there is a modification of that theory, which, as having found a strong advocate on English ground, demands a separate consideration. I allude to Mr. Grote’s own theory, which, after denouncing Lachmann’s views in the strongest terms, he announces as follows :—

“ Nothing is gained by studying the Iliad as a congeries of fragments once independent of each other: no portion of the poem can be shown to have ever been so, and the supposition introduces difficulties greater than those which it removes. But it is not necessary to affirm that the whole poem as we now read it belonged to the original and preconceived plan. In this respect the Iliad produces upon my mind an impression totally different from the Odyssey. In the latter poem, the characters and incidents are fewer, and the whole plot appears of one projection, from the beginning down to the death

<sup>1</sup> Edit. 1862, vol. i. p. 551.

<sup>2</sup> Wolf was too sagacious not to foresee that his theory would appear to many a sort of literary atheism, and so he answers the charge in the *Prolegomena*, p. 134. Still, those who

believe in a great poem cannot avoid thinking that the Wolfians are engaged in a perverse attempt, closely analogous to that meagre method of explaining the world without a God, in which certain incomplete intellects have in all ages found an unnatural delight.

of the suitors : none of the parts look as if they had been composed separately and inserted by way of addition into a pre-existing smaller poem. But the Iliad, on the contrary, presents the appearance of a house built upon a plan comparatively narrow, and subsequently enlarged by successive additions. The first book, together with the eighth, and the books from the eleventh to the twenty-second inclusive, seem to form the primary organization of the poem, then properly an Achillēis : the twenty-third and twenty-fourth books are, perhaps, additions at the tail of this primitive poem, which still leave it nothing more than an enlarged Achillēis. But the books from the second to the seventh inclusive, together with the tenth, are of a wider and more comprehensive character, and convert the poem from an Achillēis into an Iliad. The primitive frontispiece, inscribed with the anger of Achilles and its direct consequences, yet remains after it has ceased to be co-extensive with the poem. The parts added, however, are not necessarily inferior in merit to the original poem : so far is this from being the case, that amongst them are comprehended some of the noblest efforts of the Grecian epic. Nor are they more recent in date than the original ; strictly speaking, they must be a little more recent, but they belong to the same generation and state of society as the primitive Achillēis. These qualifications are necessary to keep apart different questions which, in discussions of Homeric criticism, are but too often confounded."<sup>1</sup>

In judging of this theory, the reader is requested to bear in mind what was already indicated,<sup>2</sup> that we have here not indeed a systematic and thorough process of dissection and disintegration, but a result which is as much a direct application of Wolf's principles as the sixteen small songs of Lachmann. I feel convinced, indeed, from the passage in the 'Prolegomena' above referred to, that if Wolf had published an exsected edition of the Iliad, in order to exhibit its original form, as the consequence of admitting

<sup>1</sup> Grote, vol. i. p. 553, edit. 1862.

<sup>2</sup> Note, p. 186, *supra*.

his principle, we should have had a work before us much more like Mr. Grote's *Achilleid* and *Iliad* than like Lachmann's collection of Iliac ballads. If, therefore, the English historian is right in this matter, the Wolfian theory is triumphant.<sup>1</sup> The particular form which his scepticism assumes may startle the imagination less, but it is not the less a decided declaration of war against all literary authority, and all poetic instinct, and all the common sense of common men in the matter of the Homeric poetry. Mr. Grote treats the *Iliad* more gently, indeed, than he does the agrarian laws of Lycurgus in another part of his great work; for these laws, he says, never existed, being only trumped up by a clique of political reformers to give substantiality to a dream; whereas Homer's *Iliad*, under a different name, is still an *Iliad*, as the *Laocoön* would still remain the *Laocoön*, if we should suppose one of the three figures cut out of the group.

The arguments by which Mr. Grote has convinced himself that his special modification of the Wolfian theory is true, resolve themselves into two. First, he endeavours to prove the existence of so many and so important discrepancies between the books of his supposed *Iliad* and those of the original *Achilleid*, that the ideas of organic unity of plan and identity of authorship are excluded. In the next place, he lays down the principle, that whenever "the exigencies of a coherent scheme are satisfied" we are to presume additions from a foreign hand; "nor are we to extend the oldest poem beyond the limits which such necessity prescribes." Now, before examining these objections in detail, there are two general remarks which occur to me as raising

<sup>1</sup> Bäumlein, in an excellent article (*Philologus*, 1856), justly considers the admixture of German scepticism with a certain amount of English conservatism in Grote's Homeric chapter as a "bemerkenswerthe Erscheinung."

a strong presumption against this theory. The first is, that by the amputation which we are thus called on to make, some of the very best books of the Iliad are disallowed to the original composer, and assigned to a secondary interpolator; just as if we were to assert of Raphael's 'Transfiguration,' that according to its original scheme it did not more than half fill the present canvas, the picture having been afterwards extended, and some of the best figures added by Giulio Romano, or some other of Raphael's disciples. This would be a bold assertion to make; and though it might be proved, yet the man who made such an averment would require to come armed with more than mere plausible suspicions and ingenious conjectures. No lover of St. John's Gospel certainly would have submitted to lose the beautiful history of the woman taken in adultery on any such grounds; but to the Vatican and the Alexandrian manuscripts of course a reasonable piety may yield. Now, if there are any books in the Iliad, after the first, that chain the reader, whether by their graceful beauty, their glowing fervour, or their touching pathos, it is precisely the third, the fifth, the sixth, the ninth, and the twenty-fourth, all of which Mr. Grote excludes. This wholesale ejection throws the poetic lover of Homer at once into a defensive attitude; and under the fervid influence of the grand old minstrel's genius, he feels himself thrown back upon that famous sentence of John Wilson, already quoted: "Some believe in twenty Homers; I believe in one. Nature is not so lavish of her great poets." But more than this: Mr. Grote constructs an Achilleid, as distinct from an Iliad, and then ejects from it that particular book—the ninth—in which, after the first, the character of the fierce and prideful hero breaks out most flamingly. Let any clipper of stage-plays try

the same trick of exsection upon the well-known scene in 'Henry IV.' (Act I. sc. III.) where Hotspur is most like himself, and he will soon be made to feel that the gallery knows a great deal better than any critical Lachmann or Köchly where the hand of the mighty master sways. Again, Mr. Grote's theory of an enlarged scheme, of an Achilleid expanded to an Iliad, does not by any means, in the circumstances, afford a presumption of a diversity of authorship. Nothing is more common, even in modern times, than for an author to extend his plan as he proceeds in his work. This may produce a want of subtle coherence in the parts of the work, and disturb the perfect harmony of the impression, but it certainly will not quench the fire of genius felt through the work, much less create the suspicion of a diversity of authorship. In the present day, the necessity of satisfying the frequent demands of an increased circle of readers, has had the effect of inducing great novelists to publish their three-volume works first in parts; and instances might easily be pointed out in which this practice has seriously damaged the æsthetic unity and the artistic proportions of the work. But Homer no less, or rather much more, than Dickens, or Trollope, or Thackeray, was the servant of the generation whom he entertained; and as their necessities did not require the production of a complete artistical whole at first, he might easily be led, in the course of successive cantos belonging to the same cycle, so to enlarge his plan as to produce the appearance of ignoring in one part what he had prominently brought forward in another. If, therefore, the objections advanced by Mr. Grote against the ninth book should lead any one to suppose that it could not have been part of the original Achilleid, the most obvious way to account for the supposed want of more definite allusion to it

in the later books, is to suppose that the books of Mr. Grote's Achilleid were first composed by the minstrel, and the ninth book afterwards added to bring out more strongly the haughty and inexorable character of the hero.

But we are not reduced, in the present case, to the necessity of disproving Mr. Grote's theory by simply denying the logical sequence of his conclusion. We deny his premises altogether. We cannot perceive the discrepancies; we see plainly also that those very books which he rejects are necessary to the whole, not only as being most instinct with the peculiar genius of the poet, but as being essential parts of a well-conceived structure. Let us consider what the poet had to do the moment that Achilles had retired in sullen indignation to the ships. He could not bring him back immediately. The very conception of his character implied that he could not be brought back till all the other chiefs, and even the gods in Olympus, had tried to take Troy without him, and failed in the attempt. This is the true reason of what appears to Mr. Grote to be an enlarged scheme. The enlargement was not an afterthought, but arose necessarily out of the poet's determination to do justice to Achilles, not in the mere mercantile way of paying him back his due with damages, but by proving before the imagination of the reader that Achilles is indispensable to the war. How, then, shall we understand Grote, when he says that the prowess of Diomede, in the fifth and sixth books, is not essential to the plan of an Achilleid? To me the poet appears plainly to have given such prominence to Diomede for the single purpose of showing, that in spite of all that this doughty hero, with the miraculous aid of Athena, could do, the counsel of Jove must stand, and Troy could not be taken till the wrath of Achilles was appeased. Mr. Grote

indeed says that in these intervening books, and in all the seventh, the Greeks are represented as in the full career of victory, and Jove seems altogether to have forgotten the promise to Thetis made in the opening of the poem. I see no such career of victory, and no such oblivion on the part of the Thunderer. The success of Diomede, magnified, as all successes on the Greek side always are by the patriotism of the Greek poet, is after all only partial. At the opening of the seventh book, when Hector and Paris march out to battle, we find the Greeks, by the onslaught of these two heroes, cut down in such masses, that the flashing-eyed Athena, perceiving

*'Αργείον δλέκοντας ἐνὶ κρατερῷ ὑσμίνῃ—*

“ Her dear-loved Argives perishing in the tug of the stout-arm’d fight,”

is forced to propose another single combat to give remission to the slaughter ; which proposal, having been accepted by Hector and Ajax, the duel takes place, but being interrupted by the night, produces no result. The parties remain on the field ; mutual proposals are made for a truce to bury the dead on both sides ; and though Antenor, the Trojan spokesman of Greek feelings, proposes now to put an end to the war by the surrender of Helen (vii. 348), Paris will hear of no such concession ; he will give the jewels and other chattels that the Spartan queen brought with her from Lacedaemon, but not the fair woman herself. This, of course, does not look like peace. Agamemnon has made no real progress. The false dream has done its work. The king of of men has not taken the broad-wayed Troy. Nay, worse, so long as Achilles remained in the camp, we are expressly told that the Trojans remained cooped behind their walls ;

now Paris and Hector ride about victorious over the field, and leave even the brilliant assaults of Diomede, as our Highlanders did the dashing charges of Napoleon's cuirassiers at Waterloo, barren of all result :—

“Shame on you, Argive dastards, for beauty admired, not for valour !  
Never while godlike Achilles went to and fro in the battle,  
Ventured the Trojans beyond the Dardan gate of the city  
Harnessed for fight ; for they fear'd the weighty lance of the hero ;  
Now at the ships they stand, nor seek the defence of their bastion.”<sup>1</sup>

This state of affairs is a sufficient answer to Mr. Grote's special objection to the erection of the rampart, at Nestor's suggestion, in Book VII. The learned historian can see no motive for such an erection in the present concatenation of the poem. The motive is obvious enough. Nestor disapproved of Agamemnon's attack under present circumstances from the beginning, and only consented to take a share in it from his duty to the monarch (ll. 79). He was too wise an old counsellor to believe that the walls, which had defied the whole Achaean force for nine years, with the help of Achilles, would now fall in the tenth year without him ; but he was too loyal a captain to abandon his general-in-chief at the moment when his authority had been defied by the fuming young Hotspur of the camp. He therefore, seeing that the most kingly courage and the most heroic devotion in offensive movements had produced no result, considers that the present moment is fit for resorting to a measure of defence. He advises them to build the rampart, and it is built. How far writers from a strictly military point of view, may have been justified in the comments which they have made on this matter, does not concern

<sup>1</sup> Iliad v. 787.

us here;<sup>1</sup> of the poetical propriety of the incident I can entertain no doubt.<sup>2</sup>

It is essential to Mr. Grote's theory to prove, with the Wolfians generally, that the second book does not link on with any propriety to the first. I have already, in answer to Köchly, fully expressed the coherence that seems to me to exist between these two books. The dream may be called a clumsy expedient; but it is there. Nor is it there to no purpose. Agamemnon is fooled by it into a vain confidence that he will forthwith take Troy—

*νῦν γὰρ κὲν ξλοις πόλιν εὑρνάγυιαν*  
*Τρώων.*<sup>3</sup>

This vain confidence it is precisely which drives him to his ruin. He does not take Troy; and in this bafflement the revenge of Achilles consists. But Mr. Grote has directed his battery with peculiar force, not only against the exordium of Book II., but also against that of Book IV. Here also he cannot see that Jove is doing anything to further his purpose, and procure honour to the son of Thetis. Nay, rather he finds so flagrant a contradiction between the speech of the Thunderer in this place and his promise to Thetis in Book I., as to justify the conclusion that the two books could not have belonged to the same poem, nor have been composed by the same author. I request the student to read that celestial colloquy quietly for himself, and to take it without captiousness, as he would a similar scene by Dan Chaucer or Robert Burns; and then let him say whether he is struck by any such inconsistency as the distinguished his-

<sup>1</sup> Mure, vol. i. p. 461.

<sup>2</sup> This point, and the general necessity of Books II.-VII. to the Achilleid, are well stated by Bäumlein (*Philologus*, 1856). This writer is one of the

few German scholars whose sound judgment has not been deceived by the specious dissections of Lachmann's school.

<sup>3</sup> II. 29.

torian of Greece discovers here. It is quite true, as he says, that if the one of the alternatives proposed by the supreme ruler in this place, viz., the making of peace, were adopted, then the wrong offered to Achilles would remain unexpiated. But if Mr. Grote's mental vision had not been blinded in this case by a passion for a favourite hypothesis, he might have seen that Jove, according to the express words of the poet (ver. 5, 6), is only amusing himself here with a little connubial banter; and even if the air of banter were not so obvious, the contradiction would be only one of that kind which constantly arises from the union in Jove of the two inconsistent characters of an all-seeing providence and a polytheistic god made after the likeness of men, and acting after the manner of human relations and human passions. Nay, even in Christian theology contradictions of a similar nature must frequently occur, whenever human liberty appears as an agent in matters previously determined by divine foreknowledge. It is not to be supposed that the simple-minded old Smyrnean minstrel should always be able to avoid apparent contradictions in a domain where subtle Calvinistic and Arminian doctors are apt to find their phraseology entangled in a hopeless war with their dogma.<sup>1</sup>

In reference to the execution of these seven books, I have only two further remarks to make, that besides the passage, v. 787, they contain other allusions to the wrath of Achilles (IL 375, 685; IV. 512; VII. 228), which show distinctly that the poet during their progress had not forgot his hero; and, again, it appears to me pretty plainly, that the Olympian exordium of Book VIII., which Grote retains, springs naturally out of the proceedings in the "prowess of Diomedes," and

<sup>1</sup> Compare further against Grote | vol. vi. p. 392; a paper by an original here, Lloyd, in *Classical Museum*, | thinker.

only out of these. The interdict here laid on the gods from taking part in the human battle, is not to be regarded as a matter of course in the celestial policy, but rather as a special ordinance, which Jove would not have put forth without special cause. That special cause is to be found in the extraordinary aid which Athena had given to the son of Tydeus in the fifth book, and the harm which had thence accrued to the delicate-wristed Aphrodite and the loud-roaring Mars. On the whole, I conclude that Mr. Grote's attempt to eject these seven books from the natural scheme of an Achilleid, that is, from the *Iliad* as we now have it, is a complete failure, and proceeds from aesthetical views and critical principles as fundamentally false as those of Lachmann and Köchly, whom he disowns.

But it is Book ix. that is the great stumbling-block in Mr. Grote's way, not that it does not contain any allusion to the wrath of Achilles—far from it, for precisely this book, in which the embassy sent to the hero fails, brings that wrath to its culmination; but the subsequent books, adds the learned historian, make no adequate mention of this culmination—proceed, for the most part, as if no such book existed. The hero in this book, in the most solemn way possible, receives the most ample offer of amends from the humiliated monarch; these he indignantly rejects; and yet in the subsequent Books (xI. 607; xVI. 52, 72) he speaks as if no such conciliatory proposals had been made. The answer to this is that we must not deal with a proud and unreasonable man as if he were a cool logician. He would not accept the first proffers of Agamemnon's friendship, because his revenge was not yet sufficiently gratified; he wished to see the king not only on the ground, but in the dust before he would yield. He yields afterwards, not because more ample amends were offered, but because friendship had now produced that

softening of his obdurate heart, which reason and policy and patriotism had failed to do ; and no mention is made in certain places of his inconsistency in accepting an apology at one time which he had refused at another, just because there is nothing more wise, in healing a breach of wounded feeling, than for both parties to make as few explanations as possible. If any reader is not content with this view of the motives that led to the apparent forgetting of Book IX. in the transactions which follow, he may resort to the explanation given above, viz., that Homer did not compose this book till the eleventh and sixteenth were finished ; but in any case he must bear in mind, as Mr. Grote states honestly, that there are two passages in his Achilleid which expressly mention the embassy in Book IX. These passages are xix. 140, and xviii. 448. To say that the first of these passages was specially inserted "to establish a connexion between the ninth book and the nineteenth," savours too much of the arbitrary procedure of the German school to find favour with Scotch or English critics.

I conclude this chapter with a short examination of Mr. Grote's aesthetical canon with regard to "satisfying the exigencies of a coherent scheme." It appears to me that, applied to any kind of poetry, but especially to epic poetry, a canon more meagre and more inadequate could scarcely be laid down. People ought not to talk about a poetical composition as if it were a mathematical evolution of what lies necessarily involved in certain definite forms, or a logical concatenation of unavoidable sequences in an argument. It is the virtue of a geometrical or an algebraic demonstration to be close and cogent, the shorter always the better, provided no link in the chain of proof be overleaped. But it is the virtue of poetry, especially of epic

poetry, to be ample, luxuriant, and diversified. The novelist who should confine himself, in the telling of his human tale, to such scenes only as are absolutely necessary to satisfy the exigencies of a coherent scheme, would find it very difficult to make up his three volumes. Neither he nor the epic poet is in any haste to make a straight road to his catastrophe. Like a botanical tourist, both rather avoid the post road, and allow themselves willingly to be led into many long far-withdrawn glens, and to wander back into their route over the grey top of some bleak-shouldered Ben, and down the face of some fern-feathered crag; and both with the same object; for the poet and the botanist are equally in search of flowers. If Mr. Grote's canon were admitted, such a thing as an episode would be unknown in epic poetry; as, indeed, he has cast out Book x., with some ancients more curious than wise, for no other reason that I can see, than because it is a sort of episode; whereas, from the homely wisdom of Hesiod down to the subtle meditations of Tennyson, poetry has often been most attractive when poets have allowed themselves most widely to digress. And the reason is obvious. Poets, of course, are reasonable beings, and must have a coherent scheme to start with and to fall back upon; but fancy is a wayward child, and imagination prefers a free ramble amid the grand irregularities of an open park to the nice formalities of measured squares and calculated lines. But with regard to that tenth book, a perfectly just criticism cannot allow that it is of a properly episodic character, and may be removed without injury to the whole. As of the events in any military campaign, it may justly be said that some are necessary to the strategic scheme, and others only episodical, but all contribute to the result; so we may say of the scenes in the mimic war of a great military poem,

that, while some are indispensable to the very existence of the action, none are altogether useless. In the ninth book, the Greeks had been dispirited by the failure of their attempt to bring back Achilles. It was now necessary to revive their spirits by some brilliant exploit, otherwise the war could not go on, and the catastrophe could not be worked out. The nocturnal expedition of Diomede and Ulysses was precisely such an exploit, and was absolutely necessary to elevate Agamemnon into that attitude of high confidence which he assumes in the eleventh book. Besides, as Payne Knight has remarked,<sup>1</sup> it ought not to be forgotten that the tenth book is the *apòsteia* of Ulysses; and it seems to have been part of the plan of the Iliad, while doing all honour to Achilles, to give to each of the sceptre-bearing kings an opportunity of exhibiting his prowess. Had Homer done otherwise, his poem would have been popular only in Thessaly; and Cleisthenes, the tyrant of Sicyon, would have had no cause to eject from his city Homeric poems which chiefly sang the glories of the house of Argos.<sup>2</sup> So difficult does it seem for the most keen-eyed scrutiny which modern critical art can apply, to find a fault in the strategic dispositions of the great captain of epic poetry; criticism must therefore, I imagine, take lower ground, and learn from the practice of the greatest poets those laws of imaginative unity which no analysis of the mere understanding can prescribe.

The essential difference between such an imaginative unity and the completeness achieved by the close exility of a mathematical or a logical sequence, stands out with striking effect in the two concluding books of the Iliad, which Mr. Grote excludes. On the contrary, I believe that the strength of Greek feeling, in all matters connected with the

<sup>1</sup> *Proleg.* 26, 27.

<sup>2</sup> *Herodot. supra*, p. 241.

dead—of which we have a familiar example in the ‘Antigone’ of Sophocles—would not have permitted any great national poem to come to an epic close without these two books. The last book, in deep and simple pathos the finest of the whole, as was remarked above, is absolutely necessary, not only to reconcile the reader to Achilles, but that Hector also may have his due. For, though it was the object of the poem to glorify Achilles, there can be no doubt that the poet loves Hector also; so much so, indeed, that some persons have concluded that the author of the Iliad was a Trojan, not a Greek, and that the real hero of the song is Hector, not Achilles.<sup>1</sup> This is a mistake; but it is a mistake, like so many others, the exaggeration of a truth, and one which justifies the Iliad of tradition, and negatives the Achilleid of Mr. Grote.

The conclusion of this whole discussion is, that there remains a soul of truth in the Wolfian theory, but its operation is to be recognised among the rude materials which Homer used and fused, not among the shapely fragments of finished work which Pisistratus collected and arranged.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> D'Arcy Thompson, *Day Dreams of a Schoolmaster*. Edinburgh, 1864. *der Griechen*, p. 206, that the views

<sup>2</sup> Since writing the above I have looked into Kiene, *Die Komposition der Ilias* (Götting, 1864), an able statement of the unity of the Iliad against the Wolfians. I observe also, in recurring to G. W. Nitzsch's *Epiche Poesie* stated in this dissertation may boast the support of a German scholar of no less weight than Ritschl. It seems plain, therefore, that the able Oxonian referred to in the note, p. 186 *supra*, will have to qualify his statement considerably even as regards Germany.

## DISSERTATION VII.

### HOMER AS AN EPIC ARTIST.

THE general drift of the preceding discussions has been to set Homer before the modern reader as an ancient *ἀοιδός*, or popular minstrel, a sort of intellectual workman generically distinct from the poet of literary culture and elaborate artistic execution. But if the Iliad be one great organically articulated poem, and if all attempts to resolve it into separate independent unities, however ingeniously made, have signally failed, then the author of that poem is certainly something more than a mere ballad-singer, or even a king of ballad-singers : he rises altogether into a different and a higher region, and is, in respect of the form and structure of his poetry, no less a great architect of words than Virgil or Milton. As high as an ample many-tiered and lofty-domed minster stands in point of constructive power above the single little chapel, of which it may contain a dozen in one of its aisles, so high, as a work of poetic art, does the Iliad transcend the most perfect ballad that ever was written. Homer, therefore, is in one sense an epic artist. The materials, the colour, and the spirit of his great poem belong to the genus popular ballad ; but in so far as these materials are cunningly worked up into a grandly consistent rhythmical narration, he is an epic artist. This view of his character, as it respects the mere external frame of his great work,

lies on the surface, and as such for a long time dominated exclusively over the public mind; but though on the surface, it is nevertheless a fact, and must be seriously considered before any just estimate of the true position of Homer in the history of poetic expression can be formed. We shall therefore devote a few pages here to the consideration of the problem proposed by epic art, and the success which has attended Homer's solution of that problem, as compared with the great masters whom the judgment of the world has admitted as his worthiest competitors. In other words, we shall compare Homer with Virgil, Milton, and Tasso, not as poets generally—a comparison which has led to a great deal of impertinent and unfruitful remark,—but as epic poets in respect of their story, and the skill with which they handle their materials. We shall thus refute the dis-organizing and sceptical theories of Lachmann and Köchly by an argument of the most common use and acknowledged validity in all scientific researches,—the argument from analogy. If the 'Æneid,' the 'Jerusalem,' and the 'Paradise Lost,' works confessedly produced by intellects of the highest constructive power, are found on examination to contain certain elements of structure in common, which are the admitted signs of the presence of such constructive power; and if the Iliad of Homer exhibits these signs in an equal or a greater degree than any of those three great master-pieces of epic art, the conclusion that this great poem must have had an author belonging to the same high order of constructive intellect follows as certainly as any of which the rich annals of inductive physical science can boast. Let us inquire, therefore, in the first place, from the nature of the case, what are the great and necessary laws of epic structure, as contrasted with an aggregation or co-ordination of sepa-

rate little narrative unities called ballads, or *Volksagen*, and let us then endeavour to show how far these laws have been realized in the case of those most famous epic structures which we have just mentioned.

The leading laws of the style of poetry called Epic seem as follows :—

1. An epic poem is the rhythmical narration of some great action of popular interest and national significance.

2. An epic poem, as distinguished from a ballad, implies a certain magnitude ; but this magnitude is not definable by any exact laws. The most famous epics consist of twelve books or twenty-four, just as the most famous tragedies consist of five acts, and the most famous novels of three volumes ; but these numbers seem quite conventional. Tasso's epic has twenty cantos ; and we can conceive a great epic poem of not more than one-fourth the size of the Iliad. In the 'Argonautics' of Apollonius there are only four books, but they are of such size as to be equal to eight books of the Iliad, or twelve of the Odyssey. A certain magnitude, however, is as necessary to an epic as to a palace or a mountain. On the other hand, too great a magnitude is dangerous, as destroying the effect which the artist intended to produce. Every work of art must be, to use Aristotle's phrase, *εὐσύνορτος*, that is, easily embraced by the eye ;<sup>1</sup> otherwise the spectator is overwhelmed and confused, and cannot intelligently admire what he does not distinctly grasp. Edinburgh, for instance, is a more beautiful city than London, for several reasons ; but certainly for this, that the beauties of the Scottish metropolis can be seen at once, those of London only in detail. Edinburgh is a picture ; London is an ocean. Edinburgh, if the phrase may be allowed, is an architectural landscape ;

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 7.

London is a forest of houses. But although these extremes may be distinctly felt, no human intellect can mark them tangibly off. We may say that Spenser's epic and Ariosto's are too long; but if we say that Scott's poems are not epics because they are composed of only six books, we err grossly; for these most sunny, salubrious, and in their general tone most characteristically Homeric of modern poetical productions, fall short of the epic, not because of their inferior magnitude, but because they profess to deal with personal adventure only, and do not rise to the dignity of national concern. They differ from an epic as a pipe does from a trumpet. Generally, however, the large subject brings the large form along with it, as Rome is built on the Tiber, and Tivoli on the Anio.

3. This national significance is the soul of the poet's work, and causes him to soar in a region far above the mere personal fortunes of his hero. He, along with the accessory characters in the action, is chosen only as the convenient medium or effective spokesman of the national life. The epic poet has always something in view, or, if not consciously in his mind, at least pulsing strongly in his heart, much deeper than his story. The *Æneid*, with Virgil, did not mean *Æneas*; it meant Rome. The wrath of Achilles with Homer did not mean merely a quarrel between two Achæan captains, with hot words and hard consequences, but a struggle between Greeks and Barbarians, between Europe and Asia.<sup>1</sup> This

<sup>1</sup> What is the real subject of the Iliad, the wrath of Achilles or the war of Troy, is an old dispute; the observation in the text shows how it must mean both. Keble (*Præl.* i. 90) says well: " *Iram Achillis verius dici non dum fabulæ quam totius poematis argu-* *mentum.*" Blair (Lect. 42) considers this double subject hurtful to the unity of the Iliad, but he is wrong. It is formally double, intrinsically one. Kiene, in his fifth chapter (p. 23), *der ethisch nationale Hintergrund der Ilias*, takes exactly my point of view here.

wide scope often justifies the poet in putting into his canvas many things that are not in any degree necessary to the complete recital of his story.

4. But while epic poetry has this in common with history, that it narrates events of great national significance, it asserts its poetical character decidedly by giving a marked prominence to the persons by whose agency the events take place, and treats the great event rather as an arena on which human passions and human character are exhibited than as a panorama shown for its own sake. In this view it is more closely allied to the biography of great national heroes than to national history on the great scale ; it savours of Plutarch rather than of Livy, and altogether disowns Polybius. Some of its most imperative laws, accordingly, it holds in common with the historical drama. An historical drama, in fact, is simply an epic poem contracted into a series of rapid flashes, with the omission of everything not adapted to the marked emphasis of personal representation. The close relation between drama and epic poetry was pointed out long ago by a great judge. "He who knows a good tragedy from a bad," says Aristotle, "knows a good epic from a bad one."<sup>1</sup> The principles of structure are the same, but the attitude and tone of the writer are different. 'Rob Roy' is a capital play, but Walter Scott could scarcely have written it as a play. His genius was not sufficiently accentuated and intense. On the other hand, 'The Woman in White' is full of those sudden changes, startling effects, and scenic movements which distinguish the acted story of the stage from the narrated story of the novelist. One would almost think it had been conceived originally as a drama, and then extended in the broad narrative form to suit the market of the hour.

<sup>1</sup> "Οστις περὶ τραγῳδίας οἴδε σκονδαλας καὶ φαιλῆς οἴδε καὶ περὶ ἐπῶν. -- *Poet.* 5.

5. The persons or characters by whom the epic action is sustained will of course be more in number than in the ballad, and generally more dignified in position and more weighty in significance ; and they will be subject in their treatment to those laws of congruity and contrast, which belong to the very nature of all æsthetical composition. The nature of the epic requires that the persons who sustain a great action should themselves be great ; and the highest style of poetry must represent characters above the level of the majority. So Aristotle says ;<sup>1</sup> so says common sense. A multitude of low and vulgar persons, though engaged in a Crusade or a French Revolution, would not constitute an epic.

6. In harmony with the action and the characters must be the general tone and style of the epic poem. A certain grandeur and nobility of expression unquestionably belongs to the very conception of an epic ; not indeed so as altogether to exclude the easy and familiar, but so as to soar always above the trivial, and instinctively to avoid the vulgar.

7. Unity, the great proof of presiding plastic genius in all art, is specially necessary in the action of a long poem like an epic. This arises from the very nature of intellect, which acts everywhere by subjecting multiplicity to its own imperial singleness, and can never derive perfect satisfaction from the contemplation of any complex object in which this oneness does not dwell. The Supreme Being, as a Christian bishop sings, is the Supreme unity,<sup>2</sup> and by how much any finite intellect is able to dominate over a vast variety of materials, by impressing on them the stamp of its own unity, by so much does that intellect give proof of its relationship to the Infinite

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ἐνορθώντων ἐνάς ἀγρη  
Μονάδων μονάς τε πρώτη.—*Synesius, Hymn 1.*

unity from which it is derived. Without unity the parts of an epic poem fall asunder, and the work ceases to be felt as a whole. Unity is preserved by a constant reference of each part to the whole, just as in the case of an organic body. That poem has a perfect unity, of which no part can be removed without damaging the impression made by the whole.<sup>1</sup> Most of the English cathedrals, notwithstanding their inherent grandeur, are not perfect specimens of architectural art, just because they are not cast in the mould of one mind, and parts of them can generally be pointed out, which, if removed, so far from damaging, would increase the æsthetical effect of the whole, except, of course, only in so far as the eye claims a sort of right in anciently occupied space, and feels offended by a vacuity. In such edifices, by the necessity of the case seldom the work of one mind, and overpowering the judgment by their vastness and their richness, minor incongruities of this kind may easily be overlooked ; but in an epic poem, the presiding genius of the poet must always be present in every part, and even the occasional digressions must form part of the great drift and scope of the action ; and those episodes, other things being equal, are always the best which grow most naturally out of the situation.

8. The great bearer of the unity of the action is the hero. There is no great action in the world without a great man. Every French revolution has its Mirabeau, every civil war has its Cromwell, every religious reformation its Luther. So in the epic. The hero does not require to be a perfect character, but he must not be repulsive ; and there must always be a

<sup>1</sup> χρή τὸν μέθον μιᾶς τε εἶναι καὶ ταύτης θλης πρόδειντις καὶ τὰ μέρη συνεστάναι τῶν πραγμάτων οὕτως, ὥστε μένου διαφέρεσθαι καὶ κινεῖσθαι τὸ θλον διὰρ προσὸν ή μὴ προσὸν μηδὲν παιεῖ ἐπίδηλον οὐδὲ μέρον τοῦ θλον ἔστιν— μεγατιθεμένου τιὸς μέρους ή ἀφαιρου-

Aristot. Poet. 8.

certain power about him which commands respect. If we are to pity his fall, it is necessary that even a tragic hero should have his good points. A tear dropped over a condemned criminal, even when the sentence is just, is always salutary. But in an epic poem, whose tone is more calm than that of tragedy, the hero must always excite a certain amount of admiration.<sup>1</sup> Napoleon Buonaparte, whose moral nature was extremely low, albeit in his fortunes a thoroughly epic personage, would scarcely be a suitable hero for an epic, unless his inherent falsehood and selfishness were kept dexterously in the shade. The hero, of course, does not require to be always present, but he should be always felt. It is better, perhaps, that, like kings and gods, he should not make himself too cheap ; that, while his existence is never forgotten, he should appear only at critical moments, and with decisive effect.<sup>2</sup> The absence of the hero must always be significant. Whether present or absent, he is the great pivot on which the action turns. The hero is not to be confounded with the head, in respect of social position, with a king or a commander-in-chief. A person holding such a position, like Alexander the Great, or the great Frederick of Prussia, may sometimes possess all the qualities which belong to a hero, both in life and in a book ; but we more frequently find that a George III. sits on the throne, while a Nelson fights the battles. A poor plaided Covenanter, rich in faith, is a more poetic character generally

<sup>1</sup> On this point Aristotle (*Poet.* 13) says distinctly that the best tragic hero is he who falls into misfortune—*μή διδυμοχθηται δλλά διδάμαρτιαν μεγδλην* ; and in the same place he remarks that a perfectly well-conducted person, an *έπιεικής*, as the Athenians called him, is utterly unfit for a tragic hero.

<sup>2</sup> “*Nota jam res est . . . ut aliquam diu in suspenso teneatur expectatio, latente quodammodo, et quasi per transennam aspecto eo, cui totius fabulæ primariæ partes assignantur.*”—Keble, vol. i. p. 106.

than a bishop with pointed mitre and blown sleeves ; and in an epic poem, if the hero and the social or military head are the same person, there will be great difficulty in preventing the dignified proprieties which attach to the social position from interfering with the passionate energy which belongs to the centre of poetic interest.

9. A double plot—that is, a plot containing two centres of action, with peculiar persons and interests clustered round each—is so far from being a defect in an epic or dramatic poem, that it is a great beauty, provided always the two plots have some natural connexion, and work easily together, so as to conduce to a common result in which all are concerned. The more complex a plot is, consistently with unity of character, scope, and total impression, so much the greater is the skill of the poet. The

“ *Denique sit quodvis simplex duntaxat et unum* ”

of the Roman critic was not meant as an apology for meagreness.

10. Whether the plot be single or double, next to unity of plan and scope, rich store of matter is the great postulate of epic procedure. Here, as in the material world, wealth is power ; the wise disposal of intellectual wealth, on the principles of variety and contrast, is the happy structure of the poem. To “ vary well,” according to Hogarth, “ is to compose well.” The greatest fault of an epic writer is monotony and wearisomeness.

11. Of course, unity must be preserved, not only in the frame of the skeleton, so to speak, but in the whole colour, tone, and living expression of the poem.

12. The parts of an epic poem will not only make a harmonious impression as to unity,—that is, bear a common

character and wear a common expression,—but they will be well proportioned, according to the laws which constitute a whole. There will be a just balance in the parts. The vestibule will not be too large for the hall, nor will the façade—as in the Cathedral of Peterborough—be too ample and magnificent for the body of the building. The aisles will be so calculated as neither to appear contemptible beside the nave, nor to make the nave petty in being flanked by them. Though it may be true, as Goethe says, that few men know to comprehend and group a whole, but are always hasty to let their admiration or their contempt settle down on some individual point of detail, it is not the less certain that a great epic poem is a failure, if to an exercised sense it do not give pleasure as a consistent and well-proportioned whole.<sup>1</sup>

13. The most important parts of the epic whole are, the beginning, the middle, and the end. The beginning should be calculated to excite interest; the middle, to make expectation culminate; the end, to mingle a solemn impressiveness with dignity and repose. To excite and maintain interest the principal characters should appear as early as possible on the scene, and no character of real significance should be allowed to fall altogether out of view, but constantly appear in his place as a natural inherent part of the whole. A mere succession of personages, belonging to the same action, but of whom one always disappears when the other comes on the scene, is characteristic of the lowest and least organic stage of epic or tragic poetry. The weak parts of an epic story should be disposed with cunning dispersion, as a general posts his weakest battalions at the least critical

<sup>1</sup> A drama or an epic poem is *τελείας καὶ θλῆς πρόξεως μίμησις*; and a whole is *τὸ ἔχον ἀρχὴν, καὶ μέσον καὶ τελευτὴν τὸ γὰρ καλὸν ἐν μεγέθει καὶ τάξει ἔστι.*

Beauty consists in a certain magnitude and a certain disposition of parts.—Aristot. *Poet.* 7.

points of the battle-array ; but, as a whole, the action of an epic should never flag long, and, as the French say, should both march and advance sensibly. As the beginning should always be striking, so the end should least of all be tame. Like the last phrase of one of Beethoven's sonatas, the last canto of a great epic should sink into the soul with a pleasant impressiveness, as it were a powerful and pregnant epitome of the whole. A vulgar exhibitor of pyrotechnic shows often gives a lesson in this matter which an epic poet of the highest genius finds it difficult to imitate.

14. Rapidity of movement will certainly be a sign of a good epic poet ; for a rapid action comes from a fervid soul, and only a fervid soul can chain a dull hearer. This rapidity, however, is liable to be controlled by the great law that, when things are too quickly done, expectation is soon sated, and things appear to be too easily achieved. To give the impression of difficulty, in a poem, as in actual life, a certain delay is absolutely necessary. A skilful retardation of the catastrophe is the mark of a great artist. If, in reading a three-volume novel, you feel at no point of the progress of the action that the author is purposely dragging out into three volumes what was naturally fitted for two, you may conclude you have to do with a story-teller who thoroughly understands his business. He retards the catastrophe, by occupying without fatiguing the reader.

15. The superhuman element, as lying in the very nature of the ideal, is essential to all lofty poetry, but more particularly to epic poetry, the loftiest of all. A divine guidance is absolutely necessary to the conception of great social events as a harmonious whole. Therefore all epic poetry rests on national faith ; and the so-called supernatural machinery, concerning which learned critics have disputed

whether it be absolutely necessary to epic poetry, is merely the natural, and therefore the true poetical expression of the idea of divine Providence, in the form peculiar to the time and place of the epic poem. The miraculous, as a particular exhibition of the superhuman, may or may not form part of the structure of an epic. This depends on the relation which the miraculous bears to the poet's story, and to his age. The essential difference between poetry and history, according to the remark of Petronius *Arbiter*,<sup>1</sup> naturally leads the imaginative mind into the region of miracles; for an epic poet is always nearer to a prophet than to an historian, and nearer to an historian than to a lawyer; but the ministration of formal miracles may always wisely be dispensed with, when the public intelligence is inclined to believe rather in an all-wise God, whose presence is a constant miracle, than in an omnipotent God, who testifies his power by occasional startling interpositions. Without miracles an epic poem may exist, not without God; any more than an army may exist without a general, or a kingdom without a king.

Now if these canons of epic composition express, not with curious minuteness, but broadly and in fair outline, the standard by which the excellence of works of this class is to be measured, we shall have short work to make it plain that all the qualities that mark the work of the accomplished epic artist are found in Homer, as largely, or more largely, than in any the most famous master of this style of composition. First, for the sake of comparison, let us take Virgil. The *Æneid* is a characteristically Roman epic

<sup>1</sup> "Non enim res gestæ versibus comprehendendæ sunt, quod longe melius Historici faciunt, sed per ambages Deorumque ministeria et fabulosarum sententiarum tormentum, præcipitan-  
dus est liber spiritus, ut potius furentis animi vaticinatio appareat quam religiosa orationis sub testibus fides." —*Pet. Arb.* 118.

of the highest class ; its subject is the foundation of the Roman Empire by the settlement of a Trojan colony on the coast of Latium. Æneas, after Hector the most reputable of the Trojan princes, is the founder of that colony. The narrative of the poem, by the very conception of the story, naturally divides itself into two distinct parts, of which the first contains an account of the sea-wanderings of the hero from Troy to Latium, and the second his fortunes after arriving in Italy, which mark him out as the predestined founder of the mighty Rome. This natural division of the subject into two distinct parts is indicated by the poet in the division of his work, of which the first six books contain the adventures of the hero before arriving in Italy, the other six his battles with the Latin tribes before he was finally acknowledged as entitled to set foot on the soil. The first part, therefore, is essentially a book of travels and sea-adventures ; the second part a book of strife and blood-shed : the first part is a compressed *Odyssey*, the second part a condensed *Iliad*. And in this rich variety of closely massed materials, the work of the Roman poet evidently has an advantage over both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. It is the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in one. So far as a grand national theme, great variety of materials, and a close articulation of every member of an organic whole are concerned, the author of the *Æneid* may claim comparison with the best writers of lofty narrative poetry, and will fairly be deemed to have surpassed most. It would defy the ingenuity of the most curious German dissector to cut a single book out of the twelve, and say, as they say of large sections of the *Iliad*, it might as well not have been there. It is too closely packed for this. Then as to wealth of materials, variety and contrast of impressive dramatic pageant, I know of

no six consecutive books in any large poem which approach the first six books of the *Aeneid*. The shipwreck in the first book ; the account of the midnight conflagration and the flight from the captured city in the second ; the succession of sea adventures in the third ; the unexpected love entanglement in the fourth ; the graphic and thoroughly Roman description of pugilism, boat-racing, and other athletic sports in the fifth ; the sublime gloom, terrific splendour, and awful significance of the description of the realm of the Manes, which is visited in the sixth book ;—all these are scenes of a majestic shifting panorama, which I do not think are equalled, for variety and grandeur, by any consecutive six books in the *Iliad*. But when we have said this we have said the most that can be said to plant Virgil as an epic artist on a platform superior to Homer. Viewed as a whole, there are great defects in the work of the Roman of which not a trace is to be found in the Greek. In particular, he sins grievously against the important principles laid down in our thirteenth canon. His last six books are not equal to, they fall vastly short of, the first six in almost every respect. True, they contain some beautiful and affecting scenes or episodes ; the picture of the infant Palatine Rome in the settlement of the Arcadian Evander ; the prophecy of long ages of Roman heroism on the shield of *Aeneas* ; the spirit of youthful chivalry and brotherhood of arms in the midnight expedition of Nisus and Euryalus,—these seize the heart, and stamp the imagination with that peculiar power which belongs only to the great conceptions of a great master. But the main contents of these six books are an uninterrupted succession of battle-pieces, with nothing to relieve the monotony which must always belong to this species of description. What might have relieved it,—the admixture of more scenes of a

less warlike description, and the prominence of individual character in the different heroes of the strife,—the poet has either been unable or has neglected to produce. The weak point of his work, as even his most ardent admirers admit,<sup>1</sup> is his feeble portraiture of character. In the first six books, where his genius shines out so grandly, he is essentially a panoramic painter; he reminds you of Martin rather than of Raphael; for in the imposing breadth of panoramic spectacle, personality is lost. His “pious *Aeneas*” is too like the well-behaved, thoroughly respectable man, the *επιευκτός*, whom, as we have seen, Aristotle rejects as unfit for dramatic handling; nor has the poet avoided the danger stated in our eighth canon, of making his military head and his adventurous hero the same person. No doubt the plot required this; but this condition being unavoidable, the dramatic ineffectiveness of the official head of the expedition should have been relieved by some striking features in the accessory characters by whom he is surrounded. But it is not so. *Aeneas* is not only a man who deals rather in the dignified proprieties of a king’s speech, than in the flashing fulminations of an epic hero; he is brought into positions which diminish our natural respect for his official character, without adding to his weight as a dramatic agent. We may not indeed blame him very sharply for deserting Carthaginian Dido, for it was she that laid the gentle force on him, and a man is often weak in such circumstances; but when the lady mounts the pyre of desperate self-martyrdom, and the pious hero sails calmly off, by the command and under the protection of the gods,

<sup>1</sup> “In the marked distinction of the characters the *Iliad* excels the *Aeneis*, and in nothing else.” — Professor Trapp, *Preface to his Translation of the Aeneid*. London, 1718.

we cannot help sympathizing with the former. Then, again, in the battle scenes, though *Æneas* of course always behaves like a man and a good soldier, somehow or other the poet has contrived to bring *Turnus* into the more difficult situations, and to make him excite the greater amount of admiration. He is, in fact, the hero of the last six books ; and if any other soldier in that part of the work stirs the military sympathies of the reader, it is young *Pallas*, the son of *Evander*, not *Æneas*. Moreover, these six books sin grievously against that other part of our thirteenth canon, which says that the persons who are to play a principal part in the story should be introduced to the reader at as early a period of the narrative as possible. Now, instead of this, the author of the *Aeneid*, after he has half finished his poem, introduces his readers to an entirely new set of characters, of whom before we had not even heard the names. It need not be asked whether this mischance, under the conditions of the story, might not have been avoided, though it is certainly difficult to see why the first scenes might not have been laid in *Latium*, and a living interest created in *Latian Lavinia* and *Turnus* before the hero appears on the stage, who might then have been wrecked at the mouth of the *Tiber*, and told his sea adventures to *Lavinia* on the *Tuscan* border, as effectively, and more creditably, than to *Dido* on the coast of *Africa* ; but, waiving all such suppositions, the poet in the management of these last books has manifestly sinned in various ways against some of the most obvious canons of epic art, and his work stands marred accordingly. The first six books, and some scenes in the second part, will always command the admiration of those who love the highest style of poetry, and are catholic enough in their tastes to be able to admire, not the best things only, but good things also in their place.

But, as a whole, the structure of the *Aeneid* has great defects, and does not satisfy some of the most legitimate demands of aesthetical science.

Let us now see how Tasso has succeeded. The taking of Jerusalem, under the influences of chivalrous feeling and Christian zeal, by the banded Christian States in the year 1098, presents so many points of striking coincidence with the action of the *Iliad*, that a comparison of the two poems, however far removed in point of tone and execution, cannot but lead to the most instructive conclusions in reference to epic structure. The truth or falsehood of the Wolfian theory might almost be staked on this issue—whether has Homer, in his poetical account of the siege of Troy, or Tasso, in his rhythmical version of the capture of Jerusalem, managed the materials most artistically? Now, in drawing this comparison, what strikes us in the first place most strongly is this, that though Tasso was a man, as his life and sad fortunes sufficiently declare, of a most intensely poetical nature, he has nevertheless not been so fortunate as Homer in presenting his subject in that aspect which most characteristically distinguishes poetry from history. Homer does not sing the capture of Troy directly, but the wrath of Achilles and the Trojan war; he prefers to bring a collision of personal character and interests into the foreground, and leaves the historical consummation of the whole matter—the taking of Troy—to the imagination. The walls of Troy are not stormed before our eyes, as those of Jerusalem are, so scientifically, in the last books of the ‘Jerusalem’; but we know that they must be stormed so soon as Achilles and Agamemnon are reconciled. A partial Italian critic of no mean note<sup>1</sup> considers Tasso’s desertion of Homer’s

<sup>1</sup> Paolo Beni, as above, p. 202, note.

method here a great point in favour of the modern artist; but to judge thus is to confound the provinces of history and poetry, which are distinguished by nothing more than this, that while the one exhibits events by persons, the other delights to show persons through events, and while the one leaves nothing to the imagination, the other leaves as much as possible.<sup>1</sup> Let any man compare the first and last books of the 'Jerusalem' with the corresponding books in the *Iliad*, and he will clearly apprehend what a characteristic difference is here indicated. The fall of Troy, as a necessary God-predestined event, is constantly before our imagination behind all the shifting scenes of the *Iliad*; but in the opening book we have a hot personal quarrel between the general-in-chief of the Achaean forces and the captain of a brave band of Phthiotic Thessalians; while the long war-drama closes with a personal interview, inspired by purely personal interests and feelings, between the same Thessalian captain and the hoary-headed king of Troy. The story of the 'Jerusalem' is conducted in a much more historical, systematic, and, as one might say, business-like way. It is shortly this.<sup>2</sup> In the first book, which brings us into the middle of the seventh year of the war, a regular muster of the Crusaders is taken by their leader Godfrey of Bouillon, who, having in the previous campaign taken Antioch, is now on his way to

<sup>1</sup> In Phaer's version of the *Aeneid* (London, 1584), a thirteenth book is added by Thomas Twyne, Doctor in Physicke, which ends with the death and apotheosis of *Aeneas*, as if the poet had been a biographer who could not write a complete work without bringing his hero to the grave, and beyond it, if possible!

<sup>2</sup> I give a short sketch of the poem,

because I strongly suspect that at the present day, from various causes, the work of the great Italian is not much read. Of the two English versions which I have perused, Wiffen's is that which gives me the best idea of the graceful flow and harmonious majesty of the original. Fairfax has the force and vigour of the Elizabethans, but he is deficient in music.

crown the great expedition by the capture of Jerusalem. In the second book, the scene opens upon King Aladin within Jerusalem, who, with the aid of Ismeno, a wicked sorcerer, is found perpetrating those cruelties upon the Christians which the Turks practise on the Greeks at the present day, and which form the justification of the war to the conscience of the Christian reader. In this book the beautiful episode of Olindo and Sophronia is introduced; and the readers are made acquainted with Clorinda, a Syrian amazon, and Argantes, a Circassian warrior, who afterwards play the principal parts in the defence of the besieged city. In the third book the military proceedings commence. Tancred, one of the principal knights in Godfrey's retinue, is brought prominently forward, and his chivalrous love to Clorinda, the heroine of the adverse party, is unfolded. In the fourth book, a council of the infernal powers is held, which issues in the despatch of Armida, daughter of the prince of Damascus, to seduce the heroes of Godfrey's camp by her beauty, and by her knowledge of the magic art. She succeeds. And not only so, but a quarrel having arisen between Rinaldo and another of Godfrey's captains, the former, the hot Achilles of the camp, draws his sword and kills his adversary in the strife, for which offence, according to the laws of good discipline, he is banished from the camp, and Godfrey is thus deprived at once both of the hand and heart of his enterprise. In these circumstances, of course, nothing but evil can happen to the Crusaders. Tancred, unmanned at an unopportunely moment by the apparition of the beautiful amazon, does not show his wonted front of defiance to the foe; Argantes slays one of Godfrey's captains, and fights a drawn duel with Tancred, who suspends the combat, and promises to renew it after the lapse of six days. Erminia, daughter of

the deposed king of Antioch, attends him in his sickness, attached to him as strongly as he is to Clorinda. Before the town the fight continues with various fortune. But, on the whole, Argantes and Clorinda are successful. Add to this internal jealousies and open mutiny, such as are wont to arise among an assembly of soldiers of various nations deprived of their natural leaders. In the ninth book a new enemy appears, Solymon, the Turkish sultan, who attacks the Christian camp. The battle before the town is continued with various success. In the eleventh book Godfrey is wounded. In the twelfth, Clorinda, making a bold sally from the walls, burns the great wooden tower which had been erected by the Crusaders, but is slain in single combat by Tancred. The Christians now proceed to repair their damaged engines of war; but timber for this purpose can be procured only from a forest which is rendered inaccessible by the enchantments of Ismeno. The Crusaders, being thus pressed by difficulties, as a last resort send out a knight in quest of Rinaldo, who, all this while absent from the camp, was reported to be dead, but was in reality detained in the Utopian islands of the far western ocean by the sensual charms and seductive spells of the enchantress Armida. In canto xv. a most graphic account is given of the knight's voyage in a magic skiff from Palestine, along the coasts of Africa, through the Straits of Gibraltar, to the Fortunate Islands. In the sixteenth book the hero is discovered there; the enchantment is broken; he sails back to the camp of the Crusaders; while Armida joins her beauty and her devilish arts to the army of the Egyptians, who now advance to the aid of the king of Jerusalem. In the seventeenth book a regular muster of the Egyptian host is made, and, in the Crusaders' camp, Rinaldo is presented with the shield which marks

him out as the destined conqueror of Jerusalem. In the eighteenth book the fully-accoutré hero dissolves the spell of the enchanted forest, and timber for new formidable engines of war is supplied in abundance. The siege now advances with burning energy ; Rinaldo mounts the breach, and Godfrey plants the cross on the walls of Jerusalem. The Crusaders enter the town, and a dreadful massacre of the Infidels ensues. But the haughty Solyman will not yet yield. He, with Aladin, ensconces himself within the tower of David, and waits the arrival of the Egyptian host. Meanwhile, the ferocious energy of Argantes yields before the more cool and skilful soldiership of Tancred. The Circassian is slain. In the fierce combat, Tancred himself bleeds almost to death ; but is recovered by the medicinal aid given by the loving Erminia, skilled in the use of healing herbs, as the women in those times often were. This brings us to the nineteenth book. In the twentieth, which is the concluding canto, the Egyptian army arrives, and a great and decisive battle is fought, in which Godfrey is conqueror ; and the victorious army sings a hymn of triumph in the shrine of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. Now, in all this it is impossible not to see that the poetic story proceeds in as systematic and formal a way—beginning with the beginning and ending with the end—as a regular history. The disadvantages of this procedure are many. No one who has read the first book attentively will fail to have been struck with the contrast which its formal pomp of a military muster presents to the sudden flash of fervid human interest with which the Iliad opens. In the two last cantos the turmoil of war-like excitement, the smoke and fire of the siege, and the ensanguined pomp of the battle-field, appeal feebly to our noblest sympathies, compared with the simple outgush of

purely personal feeling in the closing scene of the Iliad. In the close, as in the commencement of the Italian poem, the political element predominates; in the Greek poem, the human. In perfect consistency with this distinctive character of the two poems is the character of the hero of each. In Homer's poem, where human passion gives both plot and colour, the military head sinks poetically into a comparatively subordinate position; no man mistakes Agamemnon for the hero of the piece; but in the 'Jerusalem,' as a political poem, the head of the political expedition necessarily becomes the hero of the poem. The disadvantages of this have been already pointed out in the position of *Æneas*. Godfrey is, no doubt, a much more effective central figure than *Æneas*; his personality comes much more prominently forward, and you feel that he is a man as well as a leader; still, his official position clogs his dramatic capabilities. He may be the model of a great commander, but the position of Achilles keeps him more free for all that spontaneous play of strong personal feeling, on which the effect of all poetic exhibition depends.<sup>1</sup> This Tasso was too great a poet not to feel; and for this reason he does his utmost to set against the official stateliness of Godfrey the impetuous fervour of Rinaldo, and the chivalrous sentiment of Tancred; but with regard to these secondary heroes, as Mr. Gladstone has remarked,<sup>2</sup> we must honestly admit that their relative importance is not pronounced with sufficient clearness. Rinaldo is the Achilles without whom the action cannot be completed; but not only is he dropt too long out of sight, but when he returns, he

<sup>1</sup> Trapp, in eulogizing Virgil, could stupidly ask, "What sort of a hero is Achilles?" but even De la Motte, the thorough-going French Zoilus, confesses that in the management of the character of Achilles, "Homère me semble véritablement un grand maître!" —*Œuvres*, vol. ii. p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> *Homeric Studies*, vol. iii. p. 543.

does too little to engage our affections and to assert his position as a hero. During his absence our interest has been occupied by Tancred, whose relation both to Clorinda and Erminia forms the real centre of human interest in the poem, while to him also is reserved the honour of slaying in single combat Argantes, in position and valour, though certainly not in engaging qualities, the Hector of the 'Jerusalem.' Such appear to be the main offences of Tasso against some of the most important epic canons. Of the general structure of the poem otherwise, it is impossible to speak in terms of too high praise. The battle-pieces are kept in wonderful subordination, and are judicially harmonized by the rich play of personal character and human adventure that is spread through them ; and if scenes of infernal horror and supernatural enchantment are used with a liberality which to us appear to savour more of an Oriental opera than of a grave European state poem, we must bear in mind that these things are done by the poet in accordance both with the age to which the story belongs, and with that of the people whose sympathies he commands. Tasso's enchanters and enchantresses form as much the natural background of his picture, as the witches do in Shakspeare's 'Macbeth,' or the gipsies in 'Guy Mannering.' For the predominance of amorous sentiment, and amorous adventure also, the poet is as little to be blamed as Homer is for the lack of them. They belonged to the time and to the people, and therefore also to the great poet, who is the mirror of both.

The parallel which runs so closely between the 'Jerusalem' and the *Iliad* fails at once the moment we turn to the 'Paradise Lost ;' but a glance at this poem also will be replete with instruction, if only that we may see by what dexterous use of compensating forces a great genius can conform him-

self to the same unbending laws of poetic structure, while working with materials altogether different. The action of the 'Paradise Lost,' and the materials at the disposal of the poet, were both meagre in the extreme, but their meagreness only served to show the varied accomplishments of the intellect, and the masculine character of the mind, that could use them to such a splendid result. The whole history of the fall of man is contained within a single short chapter of the first book of Moses. There was matter enough in it seemingly to admit of expansion into a splendid poetical picture of four books perhaps, such as in the case of the fourth chapter of Matthew the same poet afterwards achieved, blundering only in calling that short pictorial poem 'Paradise Regained,' whose proper name was 'The Temptation.' Nothing damns a fair achievement more certainly than giving it too ambitious a name. But in the case of the 'Paradise Lost,' the name was less than the true subject of the poem. What seemed only to afford a theme for a sacred tragedy, of more profound significance, but not of larger proportions than 'Samson Agonistes,' under the touch of Milton's genius dilated into an epic poem, which for grandeur of structure, variety of tone, pomp of language, reach of thought, and depth of human interest, has no superior among human compositions. The daring genius of our great theological poet was not to be intimidated by the mere paucity of persons and events in the proposed theme. If Adam and Eve were only two human beings, they were placed in a situation more novel, more significant, and more original than any human beings have been placed in since. Besides, they were representative beings. Like Prometheus, in the great trilogy of *Æschylus* —a production of a kindred bard on a kindred theme—Adam and Eve suffered not for themselves only, but for the whole

human race. Their sin, like that of the crucified Titan, was small in itself, but for that very reason more expressive of the monstrous nature of all disregard of His laws against whom there can be no law. In this representative character of his chief persons and their actions, the genius of Milton saw and seized a sublime advantage. The rape of Helen was an old story that concerned Menelaus and the Greeks; any modern abduction would have concerned some modern prince only, and some modern people; but the sin of Adam concerned the human race. It is of no consequence to Milton's epic whether you take the account of Adam and Eve in the Book of Genesis as a literal historical fact or not. Adam is symbolical of moral freedom in all men drifting into guilt, as Prometheus is symbolical of the boldness of intellectual energy, unchastened by the grace of moral subordination. Milton's action, therefore, is vastly more significant, and to thoughtful minds much more interesting, than Homer's. The Englishman's theme, in fact, is as much superior to the Greek's in dignity, as the struggle of good and evil in the soul of an immortal being is to the common battle of might against right, or more frequently of adverse mights, in the collision of neighbouring nations. But more than this: Milton's theme, not less than the scene where it was enacted, necessarily made his poem both a philosophical and a cosmological doctrine. As the wrath of Achilles opened up to Homer the whole drama of the war of Troy, so the fall of Adam, under Milton's handling, became a "divine comedy" of the creation, the origin of evil, and the destinies of man. If he attempted the theme at all, the mere personal interest in the fate of the hero and heroine must become a very subordinate matter to that justification of the ways of God to man which the subject involved. Rapidity of movement

and variety of incident being, by the nature of the subject, excluded, the poet had to compensate for these defects by grandeur of description, and enforcement of lofty doctrine. So far also as the poverty of Jewish invention had supplied him with superhuman personages, angelic ministrations, wars in heaven, and intrigues in hell could not be wanting to one of the most learned scholars of an age fertile in intellectual giants ; and in all this, along with what selection from the rich store of Hellenic myth might be applicable, the genius of Milton found the rich compensation for the natural baldness of his theme. With the whole universe to wander through, and a fancy always more at home when hovering nigh the celestial battlements than when in the precincts of the dovecot and the ploughed field, he exhibited in his first eight books, that is, through two thirds of his poem, a pomp of cosmical spectacle, a variety of supermundane and human scenes, and an amplitude of philosophical reflection which in Homer's time did not lie within the scope of imaginative possibility, and to which Virgil, in some parts of his poem, could make only a distant approach. He does not, therefore, weary by monotony—the danger most to be apprehended in so meagre a theme ; and in all the great points of epic propriety he stands the most favourable comparison with the greatest of his predecessors. His characters, human and angelic, are as various and well-sustained as the nature of the case admitted ; his dark debaters in the great Pandemonian council are more distinctly marked, and personally more impressive, than the human characters of Virgil ; and as regards his hero, those have only forged a shallow jest to display their ignorance, who say that the Devil is the real hero of the 'Paradise Lost,' throwing Adam altogether into the shade. The hero of

Milton's poem is not Adam, but Adam and Eve together, as representing humanity. If skilfully handled, they ought to be felt as the centre of interest in the poem, and not only so, but as the centre alike of moral admiration and of æsthetical harmony. And so in fact they are ; and as for the great adversary, if he had not been, by the outline of Jewish tradition, a being of gigantic proportions, Milton's genius would have made him so. For his plot has this in common with the Iliad, that his hero does what is manifestly wrong—Achilles proudly rebelling against his general, and Adam weakly departing from his Creator ; and in this case the wise poet must paint the palliation of the offence in colours which prevent our sympathy with his misfortune from being overwhelmed by our indignation at his moral turpitude. This palliation the bard of the Iliad has managed in the most skilful manner, not only by the manifest unfairness of the original wrong which roused the indignation of his hero, but by the delicate traits of human kindness afterwards exhibited in his relation to Patroclus and Priam ; and, to achieve the same necessary end, for Milton there was evidently no course open but to magnify the power and resources of the great enemy of human happiness. Beyond this the poet has not spent a line on the delineation of Satan which contributes to give him an apparent grandeur ; nay, rather, in the midst of his daring flight through chaotic space and the confines of the world, we find his native hideousness unveiled before the pure glance of the Angel of the Sun ; and, amid the green bowers of Paradisian innocence, he appears in the most odious colours as a liar, a coward, and an eaves-dropper. In the management of his hero, therefore, I cannot but think that Milton has been wonderfully successful. His Titanic Devil is in every lineament a fiend, as nicely adapted for the

great achievement of the fall of Adam, as the thoroughly human devil Mephistopheles, in Goethe's tragedy, is for the fall of the weak German dreamer, John Faustus. Only one fault appears in the structure of this noble poem, and it is the lack of wise proportion between the two great parts of the poem, laid down in our thirteenth canon, and against which we found Virgil so unhappily offending. I will not say whether it would have been possible in Milton's case, as it might perhaps have been in Virgil's, to avoid the comparative weakness in the close; I rather think the conditions of the theme rendered every other finale impossible; but so it is, the grandeur of the early books of the poem is not sustained by the closing scenes. Nothing, indeed, could be in better taste than the plain, unadorned words with which this great poem concludes—

“They hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow,  
Through Eden took their solitary way,”

recalling, as it does, the yet more curt close of the Iliad, so much admired by Cowper—

ὦσ οἵγ' ἀμφίεπον τάφον Ἐκτόρος ἵπποδάμοιο—

but, as the nature of an epic poem requires that it should be distinguished from tragedy by placing before the reader some great action, which not only excites his passionate interest, but supplies food by which his faculty of enduring admiration may be satisfied, the poet was obliged, in his closing books, to show that the fall of our representative father was not altogether an evil, but by the grace of the Almighty a recovery from the false step was made possible, which, in due season, and through a long course of purifying probation, should change defeat into victory. On the stage, or in a sensation novel, Romeo and Juliet may both

die by the most piteous blunders, or the stage may be strewed with dead without offence ; there are tales of sorrow and mischance, in reference to which it is enough that the hearer enjoy the thrilling excitement of the hour, and drop, according to Aristotle's precept, the purifying tear ; but an epic poem of the whole human race hopelessly ruined by the single lapse of their progenitor, would have been an offence alike against the emotions which an epic narrative is intended to excite, and the most healthy instincts of the human heart. Milton, therefore, had to indicate the work of restoration through the whole of his poem, in order to make the delineation of the fall tolerable to a human reader ; and after the fatal act was completed, could find nothing more apt with which to close his sad history, than a panoramic view of the fortunes of the human race, fighting their way through strange mazes of sin and error, while the work of redemption was being ripened in the counsels of the Eternal. But this picture was not only too crowded with a succession of historical events, to have any chance of competing with the points of distinct and detailed grandeur in the opening books, but it was also, by necessity, in the form of a prospective view, not of a direct action. The action of the poem, in fact, was over when the sin was committed ; just as in the Iliad the death of Hector, as we saw above, satisfies the exigencies of a perfect plot ; but the moral colouring which both poets required in order to make a harmonious close, was found by the Greek in an actual scene, full of picturesqueness and pathos, enacted by the principal persons in the poem ; while to the Briton the only resource applicable for the same purpose was a recited prophecy of the future. This is a decidedly weak point, but the only one, as it appears to me, in a great poem.

It will not be necessary, after the detailed analysis of the previous Dissertation, and the incidental points of comparison brought out here, to make any formal estimate of the structure of the Iliad, as measured by the epic canons which we have just been applying to the other great epics. I leave it to the reader to run over with his eye these canons, and then say whether, after a familiar acquaintance with the Iliad, he finds its structure a whit less artistic than that of the other three epics. For one, I have endeavoured to make the comparison as impartially as possible, and am not able to put my finger on more than one blemish, and this a blemish that seems to have arisen as necessarily from Homer's situation, as the single fault just noted in Milton's work arose out of his subject. What I allude to is the predominance of the hashing and slashing element, and the bulky accumulation of battle-pieces. No doubt, the rare old minstrel has shown his usual quickness of eye and freshness of observation in the curious variety of detail which he gives to the bitter passages by which the spirit of the wounded hero makes its exit from the body;<sup>1</sup> but no variety in point of detail can compensate to a modern reader for the wearisome influence of a long succession of slaughter-pieces, in which the rhetoric which accompanies the blow only tends to show more distinctly the ferocity of the man who inflicted it. Pugnacious schoolboys may delight

<sup>1</sup> The exact anatomical knowledge displayed by Homer in the description of wounds has been often admired. It is, however, only a part of the general mental habit of all men in those early times. Where there were no books to read, everybody was constantly using his eyes upon the objects that came before him; and it would certainly be

a happy change if some of the directors of our great educational establishments would take a hint from the Homeric age in this respect, and teach young gentlemen to use their eyes on natural objects, instead of eternally peeping over grey grammars and wading through dusty dictionaries.

in such descriptions, but a man of fine feeling and good taste, in these times, will rather be disgusted. All honest critics of Homer have allowed this;<sup>1</sup> and many a modern reader, I feel convinced, would relish the "tale of Troy divine" much more, if the twenty-four books, according to De la Motte's precedent, were curtailed into twelve, though not certainly in De la Motte's style. But modern feelings and modern notions must not be allowed to affect our judgment of Homer's merit as a poet. The singer of the Iliad, in an age when war was the great heroic occupation, was forced to bring into that song all the great local heroes whose fame lived in the memory of the people; and as a mere summary mention in the catalogue would not have served the purpose, every hero must have his *ἀφιστεία*, that is, a section in the great book of the great national war, in which he performs the principal part. At our great political dinners, as is well known, there are certain toasts which may not be omitted. The audience may gape a little, but the proprieties of time and place cannot be disregarded. But besides this, Homer's great apology for the insertion of certain books that might, with advantage to the general effect of the poem, have suffered excision or curtailment, lay in the fact that his poem was very seldom recited as a whole, and, even when so recited, perhaps never listened to from beginning to end by the same hearers. Of readers of his great poem, in the modern sense of the word, he could take no account, and

<sup>1</sup> "The plan of the *Aeneid* includes a greater compass and a more agreeable variety of events; whereas the Iliad is almost entirely filled with battles."—(Blair, Lect. 43.) Even Keble says: "Maxime quidem Homerus semper delectatur justa illa ac *stabilis pugna*, quam equidem dixerim *ad fastidium usque repevi*, si modo aliquid apud Homerum possit nullum *fastidio adhærere*." That means, Homer nods sometimes, but a man does not like to say it quite plainly.

was certainly not bound, in its structure, to guard against a satiety in his intellectual banqueters which, according to the then habits of feasting, could not exist.

The argument in favour of a great constructive genius, as the only sufficient cause for such a grandly constructed effect as the Iliad, might justly stop here; but there is one way of putting the case, perhaps even more effective; and with this we shall conclude this division of our subject. If we could find a narrative poem in which all the rules of epic propriety are disregarded, and see by a living example before us how easy a thing it is to string together a succession of fluently rhymed events, so as to make a consistent story, and yet fail of achieving poetic unity, we should then have the strongest possible ground for imperatively demanding the presence of a Homer to do that which, just because a Homer was not present in the supposed example, has not been done. Such an example we find most appositely in the 'Post-Homerica' of Quintus Smyrnæus, a poem belonging to the Roman period of Greek literature, containing a narrative of the events which happened to the Greek host before Troy after the death of Hector,—in fact, a continuation of the Iliad. Now here, no doubt, we have an epic subject, as good as Tasso's at least, if not quite so good as Homer's. The epic action here is the taking of Troy, and the hero of the action plainly is Ulysses, because every effort having failed to take the strong-walled city by storm, the wily king of Ithaca is necessarily called in to superintend the structure of the wooden horse, and take the city by stratagem. The poem ought accordingly to have commenced by a consultation of the Argive chiefs, to deliberate on the plan of prosecuting the war, after the death of Hector. In this deliberation Ulysses ought to have taken a prominent part,

and, notwithstanding the brilliant successes of Achilles, distinctly announced his opinion, confirmed by the old prophecy of Calchas, that Troy could not be taken till the tenth year, and then rather by fraud than by force. This counsel, of course, would be opposed by the impetuous Pelidan, and after his death by the impetuosity of his like-tempered son ; but the whole course of events would prove that Ulysses was right. Him a poet with a true epic instinct would constantly have kept in view, as the real hero of the *'Ιλιον πέρσις*. But instead of this we have a mere chronological succession of events, a narrative poem in fourteen books, without a subject, without a hero, without a catastrophe, or, to use Aristotle's phrase, a series without beginning, middle, or end. The writer plainly did not know that the fall of Troy was his subject, for he does not enunciate this theme, but runs on exactly from the point where Homer stopped, as a man would take up the broken thread of an old chronicle, and ends, not where he should have ended, with the captured city and the roar of midnight conflagration, but with the dispersion of the Greek armament on their return home, and the ruin of the Locrian Ajax by the thunderbolt of Jove, in the hands of his flashing-eyed daughter. Thus, to crown the ten years' siege, instead of a *Te Deum*--the natural conclusion of a long war--we have a shipwreck and a general submersion ; and before the proper catastrophe of the action has time to sink into our soul, with all its striking scenes and all its solemn lessons, we are hurried off into a series of new catastrophes, arising out of a new action, and producing diverse and altogether discordant emotions. Unity of action here there is none ; as little is there any prominence given to one hero above another ; but they come forward like puppets, one after the other, grandly dressed, and with a loud flourish of trumpets and

fine speeches in their mouth, knock down their men and depart. All this because the author, though possessed of a rich store of epic materials—no doubt in great part the very same which floated about the coasts of Asia Minor in Homer's day—though a fluent versifier, well read in Homer, and not without a certain eye for the poetry of rural life, was not an epic poet; did not possess a constructive mind. Here, as elsewhere, we see exemplified the wisdom of the sage of Clazomenæ, who taught that the only active principle which can explain the existence of a world is MIND. And in those little imitative worlds made by men, which we call works of art, whether it be the joining of hewn stones in an air-poised dome, or the grouping of figures in a historical picture, or the cunning interaction of different persons towards the accomplishment of one issue in a clever novel, in all such cases it is the constant presence and supervision of mind which makes coherent structure possible. The absence of this peculiar order and imperial quality of mind in the poet of the 'Post-Homeric,' has given us a mere external concatenation of warlike events, embraced within certain arbitrary limits of space and time; its presence in the poet of the Iliad has given us a work of art, an epic poem.

## DISSERTATION VIII.

### WHAT HOMER WAS TO THE GREEKS.

THE estimation in which a great writer is held by the people to whom he belongs, is a fact of scarcely less importance than the intrinsic value of the writings themselves. By the admiration with which they combine to regard him, they put the stamp of nationality on his productions, and make them rank as a prominent element, not merely in the written record of intellectual exhibition, but in the busy history of the human race. Of this, the place that Shakspeare holds in England, Robert Burns in Scotland, and Goethe in Germany, are significant examples. As action and character are the main strength of Shakspeare's dramas, so in English life and English writing, these are the most strongly pronounced and the most effective features at the present day; the humour, the fervour, the direct manly vigour, and the simple natural pathos of Burns, still remain the most attractive elements in the character of those Scots whom happy circumstance or strength of character has preserved from the contagious influence of numbers, rank, wealth, refinement, and luxury in the South; and if the Germans with one voice resist the British tendency of preferring Schiller to Goethe, we may be assured it is because they know, by a sure instinct, that the works of the great Frankfort poet exhibit some characteristic virtue of their German life, which we proud and

prejudiced islanders have neither the desire to appreciate nor the capacity to comprehend. So, if Massillon and Voltaire, after nearly two centuries of very different phases of intellectual life, still remain great, and among the greatest names in French estimation, it is because the modern French, like the ancient Greeks, are more than anything else a witty and an eloquent people, and will not allow to sink into a subordinate place, in their national opinion, writers in whom the most characteristic excellences of the national intellect are so brilliantly displayed. In like manner, if it be a fact that the whole cultivated people of Greece, from the earliest ages of their youthful blossoming to the ripe harvest of their accomplished manhood, and the sere leaf of their late decay, assigned to Homer a place among their representative men, and spoke of his works in terms of love and reverence such as they apply to no other writings, there is a significance in this fact which no student of the poet can overlook. That there may have been a large amount of exaggeration, and a certain admixture of ignorant misapprehension in their unanimous popular verdict, is likely enough, nay, certain, but does not diminish the importance of the general fact. All passion in its very nature exaggerates, and hero-worship cannot exist without in some sort transcending the bounds of sober judgment ; but sensible men naturally make allowance for this, and the Apollo of the Vatican remains a noble figure, though every man may not feel the god in his nostrils quite so strongly as Winckelmann did. Abstract what we will from the high terms of transcendental eulogy in which the wisest Greeks and the most judicious Romans speak of the singer of the Iliad, there still remains enough to show that we have a man before us not belonging to the common rank and file of famous literary men, but somehow or other,

standing with a peculiar headship over his people, as Moses did over the Hebrews, or as Luther does over the Protestant Churches, and Bacon over those who prosecute the peculiar researches of modern physical science. As a literary name there is none in modern times that surpasses, or even approaches, Shakspeare; but Homer was greater than Shakespeare, I do not say in poetical genius, but in national significance certainly, and in popular influence, for a reason that we shall presently perceive. I have thought it right, therefore, to devote a special chapter to this point, not only for its singular significance in the history of the human intellect, but because of the important argument thence derived for the historical reality of the poet, and the strong guarantee afforded of the authenticity of his transmitted works. Men do not readily fall into rapturous admiration of an altogether fictitious character; and when they have fixed their worship on a real hero, they will not let the registered memorials of his wisdom slip through their fingers like an ephemeral pamphlet, or be hawked through the streets unsought after, like the leaves of an ephemeral ballad. They will put their stamp upon the genuine currency, besides knowing by the ring of it how to distinguish the true from the false coin.

The mere familiar appellation with which Homer is generally quoted by the Greek writers, indicates a sort of pre-eminence which, perhaps, has never been accorded to any other national poet in the same way. The personal name is sunk altogether, and they call him simply ὁ ποιητής—the poet. “*Homerus, propter excellentiam, commune poetarum nomen efficit apud Græcos suum*,” as Cicero has it.<sup>1</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> *Top.* xiii. So Justinian: “*Quoties non addimus nomen cuius sit civitatis, nostrum jus dicimus; sicuti cum poetam dicimus nee addimus nomen* | *subauditur apud Græcos egregius Homerus, apud nos Virgilinus.*”—*Institut.* 1. 2. 2.

works of the earliest Greek philosophers are lost; but if Diogenes Laertius, or any other stitcher of old scraps, had preserved to our times the judgment of Thales about Homer, we should in all probability have heard from him an utterance pretty much in the same terms as that given from Democritus by the accomplished Bithynian rhetorician, Dion Chrysostom, who flourished about the middle of the first century of our era. This graceful and sensible writer, in his discourse on Homer, gives the judgment of the great Abderitan thus:—"The bard of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, possessing a divinely inspired genius,<sup>1</sup> organized a structure of the most various verses; for unquestionably, without divine and superhuman genius, books of such surpassing beauty and wisdom could not have been produced." This is a style of talking very familiar to the Greeks, or rather to the ancients generally; but with regard to Homer it was spoken with a peculiar emphasis. The same strong feeling appears in the two well-known epigrams of the Greek anthology bearing the name of Antipater, which run thus: the first—

" If Homer be a god, our human worship he may claim ;  
If not, we 'll deem him more than man, and reverence him the same."

The second—

" Nature with one immortal throe one Homer bore ; the mother  
Gave all her virtue to that birth, and could not bear another."<sup>2</sup>

Proceeding downwards from Democritus, the most impor-

<sup>1</sup> Φύσεως θεός ουντς is the phrase—a much more marked expression than the common Θεός ἀνήρ, which was applied to everybody of superior excel-

lence, as the Germans say, *ein göttlicher Kerl*.

<sup>2</sup> Jacobs, *Anthol. Planud.* iv. 301-2.

tant voices of authoritative Greek wisdom, as to the excellence of Homer, are of course those of Plato and Aristotle. The verdict of the former, the more valuable on account of his known prejudices, is given in the 'Ion,'<sup>1</sup> to the effect that Homer is "the best and most divine of the poets," and in the 'Republic,'<sup>2</sup> with the words, that though in form an epic poet, Homer is in fact the real "teacher and the leader of the tragic writers." Aristotle, on the other hand, whose cool judgment knew no bias, except perhaps against Plato occasionally, and against the Spartans, says, in comparison of all other poets "he is truly godlike (*θεοπέτειος*), excelling them all immeasurably, both in sentiment and expression." Further, he gives him this great praise, that "he alone of all the poets knew how to manage himself, which a poet best does by never speaking in his own name, but letting his characters speak for him."<sup>3</sup> In this peculiarity lay that essentially dramatic element in his nature which Plato saw so clearly: and which, perhaps, Æschylus had partly in his eye, when he said that "his tragedies were but slices cut out of the rich meat of the great Homeric banquet."<sup>4</sup> Greek men of the most opposite character and temperament united in their admiration of Homer. Of Arcesilaus, who, in the third century before Christ, founded the sceptical school of the New Academy, we learn that he regularly read a few pages of the poet before going to bed, as devout Christians read their Bible.<sup>5</sup> And Aristophanes, the stout champion of all that was best and greatest in ancient Greek life and feeling, in opposition to the pretentious pedantries of subtle but shallow scepticism, ranks Homer among the wise teachers

<sup>1</sup> *Ion*, 530 c.

<sup>4</sup> *Athenaeus*, viii. 347 E.

<sup>2</sup> *Pl. x.* p. 595 c.

<sup>5</sup> *Diog. Laert.* iv. 6. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Poet.* 23, 24.

of ancient Greece, along with the most venerated names, in those well-known anapaests of the *Frogs* :—

“ All the grand old bards of the olden time sang songs, both honest and useful ;  
 First Orpheus taught us from blood to abstain, and to use pure rites of devotion ;  
 Musaeus of leech-craft and oracles too propounded the accurate notion ;  
 Old Hesiod taught us to plough and to reap ; and Homer in high estimation  
 Stands out like a god for that wisely he taught all excellent things to the nation,  
 All the virtues of war, and of peace likewise, and the deeds that belong to each station.”

Passing from the playful old comedian to the grave verdict of professional critics, we find the most authoritative voices, both in the Greek and Roman period, joining to swell the same wide chorus of eulogy. As Plato found in the epic poet the best model for the dramatist, so the masters of eloquence in imperial Rome, five hundred years later, prescribed the study of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* to youthful orators, as the indispensable foundation for excellence in the great art of elegant and effective expression. That portent of rhetorical precocity, Hermogenes of Tarsus, who wrote at Rome in the time of Marcus Aurelius, says, in the broadest possible phrase, “ that in every style of composition, Homer excels all poets, historians, and prose-writers that ever were.”<sup>1</sup> Cicero, who calls Plato “ a god among the philosophers,” says of the poet, even more significantly, “ *Homero nemo similis*;”<sup>2</sup> and in another place shows how finely he felt the clear and full pictorial power

<sup>1</sup> *περὶ ἴδεῶν περὶ τοῦ πολιτικοῦ λόγου*, p. 381. Crispin, 1539.

<sup>2</sup> Cic. *Divin.* ii. 47.

of Homer, alluded to in a previous section:—“*Traditum est etiam, Homerum cæcum fuisse. At ejus picturam, non poesin, videmus. Quæ regio, quæ ora, qui locus Græcia. quæ species formaque pugnae, quæ acies, quod remigium. qui motus hominum, qui ferarum, non ita expictus est, ut quæ ipse non viderit, nos ut videremus, efficerit? Quid ergo aut Homero ad delectationem animi ac voluptatem, aut cuiquam docto, defuisse umquam arbitramur?*”<sup>1</sup> But the most deliberate and detailed judgment, by a Roman master, is that of Quintilian, in the long array of classical models to which the attention of the young orator is directed. In this list, bearing a stamp to which no critical judgment in ancient times or modern is superior, Homer leads the van: and it is as a model to orators only that the characteristic of the poet is given, which now follows:—

“ Let us commence, therefore, duly with Homer, as Aratus does with Jove; for in him most truly we find at once the source and the model of all kinds of eloquence, even as he himself says that all the rivers and fountains spring originally from Father Ocean. No writer has surpassed this poet, either in the sublimity with which he invests what is great, or in the propriety with which he handles what is little. He is at once ornamental and plain, pleasant and grave, admirable no less in his copiousness than in his brevity; eminent no less in the virtues of style which belong to an orator, than in the peculiar excellences of the poet. For, not to mention the words of eulogy, exhortation, and consolation with which he everywhere abounds, does not the embassy to Achilles, in the ninth book, the contention between that hero and Agamemnon, in the first, and the speeches of the different parties, in the second,—do not these parts of his great poem, I say, exhaust all the arts of pleading and debate? Then, as to the passions, he must be altogether without tincture of letters who does not feel that the old minstrel has completely in his power both the mildest and the most violent

<sup>1</sup> Cic. *Tusc.* v. 39.

emotions of our human nature. Again, in the opening verses of each poem, he observes perfectly all the laws of a well-constructed exordium, or rather, I should say, he constituted these laws by his example for ever. For he conciliates the good-will of the reader by the invocation of the goddesses believed to preside over poetry, while he at the same time fixes his attention by the magnitude of the theme proposed, and makes him surrender himself readily to his teaching by the quick survey which he gives of his whole plan. As to narration, what words could say more in less space than the lines in which the death of Patroclus is intimated? what more to the point than the account of the Curetes and the *Ætolians* in the eleventh book? Then how skilfully he illustrates, amplifies, indicates, proves, compares, uses, in fact, every art of statement and reply that belongs to the most accomplished speaker, with such abundance of various material, gathered from all the sources of human knowledge, that the principal writers on special arts and sciences have found in him their most accurate authority. As to perorations, I know not where we shall find one that pleads more powerfully and more effectively than that prayer of Priam to Achilles in the last book of the *Iliad*. To me it seems that in expression, sentiment, figures, and the disposition of his whole work, Homer goes beyond the bounds of human genius; so that a man is already a great man, not who rivals his virtues, for that is impossible, but who understands them fully. Unquestionably, the author of the *Iliad* has left all who practise eloquence far behind him, and most of all the epic poets, whose nearness to the great master in the form of the art which they practise only seems to make their distance in quality more apparent."<sup>1</sup>

After this fit summation of the general verdict of antiquity, there is no need for adding to the volume of citation that might be adduced on the point; but it is amusing, after all these weighty utterances of the classic times, to hear the jingling echo of John Tzetzes, in the sapless and unproductive days of Byzantine decadence, sounding out, in the familiar rhythm of the political verses, the couplet—

<sup>1</sup> *Institut.* x. 1.

“The wisest bard that lived on earth was he who sang of Hector,  
His song an ocean flowing, not with bitter brine but nectar.”<sup>1</sup>

Those who want to see in a more grave and serious form the immense power that Homer continued through all the middle ages to exercise over the Byzantine mind, have only to look into the preface to the Bishop of Thessalonica’s ponderous commentary on the bard. The history of the revival of learning in Italy is everywhere full of the same great fact. Petrarch longed for Homer as a mother longs for a child that had been stolen from her by a gipsy, before she was able to know it as a mother should; but the most weighty of all testimonies to the mediaeval significance of the poet is the short sentence of Dante, uttered as the procession of laurelled shades marches before the view of the severe Florentine in the ‘Inferno’—

“Questo e Homero, poeta sovrano”—

“This is imperial Homer, king of bards.”

The extract just given from Quintilian proves that the Greeks did not confine their eulogy of Homer to his peculiar function as a poet, but looked upon his works as a general repertory of fundamental facts and principles in all the branches of human knowledge. The Roman writer, who has been in this well followed by the moderns,<sup>2</sup> ranks, as we have just seen, the speeches in Homer along with the orations of Demosthenes, as the very best models which a young speaker can study. But the Greeks, though glorying somewhat vainly in the wisdom of mere words, did not seek after this sort of wisdom only; they sought after all wisdom, as St. Paul says, well knowing that fine words without sound

<sup>1</sup> *Chiliad.* xiii. 626. Lips. 1826. | *sacrâ et humanâ* (Lugdun. 1651), Lib.

<sup>2</sup> *Nicolaus Caussinus, De Eloquentia* | i. 10. Gladstone, *Homeric Studies*,  
vol. iii. p. 102.

thoughts are like a spangled robe on a fool's back, which children only can gaze at and admire. They therefore take care to inform us further that Homer was not a mere poet, that he was a possessor and professor of that peculiarly Hellenic excellence, wisdom; that he was a *σοφός* and a *σοφιστής*; as indeed the Greeks generally were not content that a poet should be a mere exhibitor of imaginative fireworks, however brilliant, but they demanded, in the first place, and above all, that he should be a wise man, and rank among the philosophers, who were at once the preachers of righteousness, and the expounders of right reason to the Greek people.<sup>1</sup> So Xenophon, in the 'Banquet,' makes one of his speakers say that Homer was the wisest of all men, on almost every subject which belongs to men.<sup>2</sup> With regard to the conduct of life, the general feeling was what Alcidamas the orator said specially of the *Odyssey*, that the works of the poet presented a perfect mirror, in which every one could see what was proper to be done on every emergency.<sup>3</sup> And unquestionably, if it be the function of the novel, as the epic of common life, to preach the wisdom of daily conduct in the most agreeable way, and with the most striking examples, a master model for that species of composition has been bequeathed for all times by the author of the *Odyssey*. But the Greeks went yet further in their large laudation of their favourite poet. The professors of special sciences in the Alexandrian and Roman epochs of Hellenic influence were proud to number Homer, as Quintilian also says, among the best authorities in their respective domains. Strabo particularly, the grave and severe geographer, commences

<sup>1</sup> οὐ μόνον οἱ σοφοὶ δὲλλὰ καὶ οἱ ποιηταὶ σοφισταὶ ἐκαλοῦντο. — Diag. Laet. Proem. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Conviv. iv. 6. <sup>3</sup> καλὸν ἀσθεντίου βίου κάτοπτρον. — Aristot. Rhet. iii. 3.

his great work with a long eulogy and defence of the poet, as the father of geographical and political science, and one who may be quoted with the most perfect confidence by the scientific writer in the minutest details of topographical description.<sup>1</sup> The medical knowledge of the author of the Iliad was highly extolled; and even modern writers of anatomy have wondered at the curious exactness of his skilfully varied description of wounds received in battle.<sup>2</sup> In physical science, he taught the significance of water, as a condition precedent of all organic life, long before Thales; in mental science he taught the immortality of the soul before Pythagoras; and in morals he foreshadowed the true path to Aristotle, by preserving, in the healthy tone and temper of his writings, the golden mean between stoical severity and epicurean indulgence. He was a framer of gnomic maxims before the seven wise men; and, in fact, not a few of his verses, containing some short sentence of practical wisdom, were received into general Greek currency, and quoted as common proverbs. His method of teaching by living examples, and by the most familiar illustrations, was considered by later thinkers as entitling him to claim a peculiar kinship with Socrates. As a theologian, he had more influence in forming the Greek type of religious conception and devout feeling than Hesiod, though the Boeotian wrote professedly on theology, as a didactic writer, while Homer was a secular poet. The great doctrine of divine providence and retributive justice on the part of the gods; the proper bliss of man in always piously subordinating himself to the will of the Celestials; these, and many other principles and traits of pure religion, are so prominent in the

<sup>1</sup> ἀρχηγέτην τῆς γεωγραφικῆς ἐμπει· | <sup>2</sup> *Bios Ὁμηρου*, in Gale's *Opuscula, plas καὶ τῆς κατὰ τὸν θλον τὸν τολμητικόν.* | p. 390.

whole structure and colour of the Homeric poems, that ancient admirers gained an easy victory when they had to contrast him with the godless dogmas of ignoble sensualists and hard fatalists among the later philosophers.<sup>1</sup> Never, perhaps, was a more lasting practical effect, or a more permanent religious impression, given to the measured utterance of any poet, than when the description of the nod of the Olympian, giving his sanction to the prayer of Thetis, in the first book of the Iliad, was taken by Phidias as the idea of his great masterpiece in sacred sculpture, the Elean Jove. We are informed by Strabo, in his account of Olympia, that when Panænus, the distinguished painter, and nephew of the great sculptor, was assisting his uncle in the modelling and chiselling of the temple sculpture, he put the question to the artist, after what model he intended to mould the statue of Jove. To which question Phidias at once answered by quoting the famous lines to which we have just alluded,—

“ He spake : and nodded with his eyebrows dark ;  
 The ambrosian locks from his immortal head  
 Down flow’d profuse ; and, sentient of his will,  
 The vast Olympus shook.”<sup>2</sup>

And even in modern times, so deep has the impression been, made by the moral majesty of the Homeric Jove, on the minds of certain admirers of the bard, that, despite the thickly scattered theological puerilities, to a Christian eye peculiarly offensive, some eminent theologians have been found to resort

<sup>1</sup> Most of the particulars here stated are taken from the *βίος Ὡμέρου* in Gale’s *Opuscula*, which, by whomsoever written, as a summary of ancient Greek opinion on the excellences of Homer, is extremely valuable. Along with this I took the two discourses of Dio Chrysostom, 53 and 55, on *Homer*, and on

the comparison of *Homer and Socrates*. On the whole of the above section my labours have been materially lightened by the copious collection of *Testimonia de Homero* appended to Duport’s *Gnomologia Homeri*, Cantab. 1660.

<sup>2</sup> Strabo viii. 354 c.

to the theory that Homer derived his lofty religious ideas from some knowledge, direct or indirect, of the Hebrew Scriptures, a notion the untenability of which we had, in a previous discourse, an opportunity to expose.<sup>1</sup>

One other consideration remains to complete our view of the influence of Homer over the Greek mind; I mean the place which the study of the poet had in the education of the Hellenic people. On this subject we are happily in possession of tolerably complete information, both from formal discussions by Aristotle and Plato, in their political works, and from incidental notices scattered through Greek authors, and specially in 'The Clouds' of the great Attic comedian. From these sources we know that the two principal elements in Greek education were *γυμναστική* and *μουσική*—gymnastics for the body, and music for the soul. By music, however, they understood, not the mere luxurious delectation of the ear, cunning rapture of the throat, or dexterous touch of the finger, but the whole rhythmical flow of wise words to which the several kinds of music were adapted; for the separation of music from verse, from reasonable instruction and from moral training, of which we have such a portentous example in the modern Italian opera performed in England, was a thing of which the Greeks either had no conception, or which they regarded as one of the most dangerous symptoms of a hypertrophy of sensuous delight, which must necessarily issue in a debilitation and debasement of the national character. Now of this *μουσική*, not only the very copious references to Homer scattered through all Greek writers, but some special characteristic scraps of anecdote, very distinctly inform us that the study of Homer, and specially of the Iliad, was a principal part. In those days, when Christianity had not pro-

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, p. 16.

claimed the great and now triumphant doctrine that peace is better than war, it was no doubt felt that the spirit of war-like patriotism, which did good service in its day by sending Xerxes back across the Hellespont, and leading Alexander to Babylon, could not be better maintained than by cherishing those memories of proud barbarians defeated by valiant Greeks, which the rhapsodies of the Iliad so vividly preserve. And this indeed is the very light in which an elegant Athenian writer looks on the prominent place which the wisdom of his Hellenic forefathers had assigned to Homer in the early education of youth.<sup>1</sup> What this place was we see strikingly in that part of Xenophon's banquet, where one of the guests puts the question to another, "O Niceratus, on what particular skill or knowledge do you plume yourself?" And the young man replied, "My father, being anxious that I should be a good man, made me learn all the verses of Homer, and now I am able to repeat the whole of the Iliad by heart, and the Odyssey also; and of this accomplishment I am proud." That this Homeric indoctrination of the youth was common among all the Greeks from the earliest times, a remarkable verse from Xenophanes, accidentally preserved by a grammarian, distinctly asserts;<sup>2</sup> and Plutarch, in his 'Life of Alcibiades,' has an anecdote strikingly illustrative of the power of Homer in the Athenian schools. "When he was

<sup>1</sup> Isocrates, *Paneg.* 159.—οἷμαι δὲ καὶ τὴν Ὀμῆρον ποίησιν μεῖνα λαβεῖν δόξαν, ὅτι καλῶς τοὺς τολεμήσαντας τοὺς βαρβάρους ἐνεκμίλασε, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο βουληθῆναι τοὺς προγόνους ἡμῶν ἔπτιμον αὐτοῦ ποιῆσαι τὴν τέχνην ἐν τε τοῖς τῆς μουσικῆς ὀθλοῖς καὶ τῇ ταιδεύ· σει τῶν πεωτέρων, ἵνα πολλάκις ἀκούοντες τῶν ἐπών ἐκμαθάνωμεν τὴν ἔχθραν τὴν ὑπέρχουσαν πρὸς αὐτοὺς καὶ ζῆλουν-

τε τὰς δρεπὰς τῶν στρατευσαμένων τῶν αὐτῶν ἔργων ἐκείνος ἐπιθυμῶμεν.  
<sup>2</sup> ἐξ ἀρχῆς καθ' Ὀμηρον ἐπη μεμαθή· καὶ τάντες (Draco, *de Metris.* Lips. 1812, p. 33), with which Dio Chrysost., in his address to the people of Ilium (xi), almost verbally agrees: "Ομηρον ὑπολαβεῖν θεῶν ἀνδρα καὶ σοφὸν, καὶ τοὺς ταῦδες εἰδόθις ἐξ ἀρχῆς τὰ ἐπη διδάσκειν.

a young man," says the wise old Chaeronean, "happening to look in one day upon a schoolmaster, he asked him for one of the poet's books, but when the schoolmaster said that he had nothing Homeric in his possession, the indignant youth gave the pedagogue a smart fillip over the face, and left the school-house." This is exactly as if a High Church clergyman in our days were to visit his parish school, and not finding the Church Catechism alongside of the Bible on the book-bench, were to give information to the bishop, and get the village birch put into more orthodox hands. In fact, as we have already said,<sup>1</sup> Homer was both Bible and Catechism to the Greeks; and the elementary inculcation commenced in the village school was carried to perfection by higher exponents when the boy attained ripe years, as appears plainly from another anecdote of the same brilliant adventurer, given in the same place:—"At another time, Alcibiades called on another schoolmaster, who told him that he had in his possession a copy of Homer, with the text revised and corrected by himself. 'I am glad to hear that,' said Alcibiades; 'but if your edition is worth anything, you ought certainly not to be teaching boys their letters, but should take your place with those higher teachers who criticise the text and expound the meaning of Homer to advanced students.'" But what really conveys a more vivid impression of the influence of Homer in Greek education, than any anecdotes about schools and schoolmasters, is the very apt and easy way in which all Greek men are everywhere found quoting Homer from memory, and applying it for the need of the moment, by a sort of habitual "accommodation," just as we see many a devout father of the Christian Church, and the ancient Jews, constantly quoting the Old Testament, without any curious in-

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, p. 14.

quiry as to the exact critical propriety of the text so applied. Rather, perhaps, amongst the subtle Greeks, devout Hebrews, and allegorizing Christians, that application of the revered text was received with the greatest favour which was the farthest removed from the original intention of the writer. A pleasant instance of the readiness with which a well-educated Greek could quote Homer to secure a good object on the spur of the moment, is recorded of Xenocrates by Diogenes Laertius. When that severe and incorruptible disciple of Plato was sent on an embassy to Antipater of Macedon, after the battle of Lamia, to treat about prisoners, he was invited by the king to an entertainment; and to this invitation, instead of answering directly, he replied by quoting three lines from the *Odyssey*—

ω Κίρκη, τίς γάρ κεν ἀνήρ, ὃς ἐναισιμος εἴη,  
τρὶν τλαιή πάσσασθαι ἐδητός ήδε ποτῆτος.  
τρὶν λύσασθ' ἐτάρους καὶ ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἰδέσθαι;

“ O Circe, what man with a human heart  
Of drink or food may taste a dainty part,  
Till his glad eyes his dear companions see  
Unbound, now held in hated thrall by thee ?”

With which happy application of the words of the wise Ithacan the monarch was so pleased, that he forthwith dismissed the prisoners, and sent the ambassador home with favour.<sup>1</sup>

But the old Mæonian minstrel had so completely become a part of Greek life, was so essentially blood and bone of every true Greek man, that the discussion of Homeric questions, and the subtle play with Homeric difficulties, real or supposed, became one of the most common forms of intellectual entertainment in the hours of convivial

<sup>1</sup> Diog. Laert. iv. 2. 6.

enjoyment, just as we find grave Calvinistic divines, at Presbytery dinners and other banquets in Scotland, regaling their hearts with strange stories about humorously applied passages of Scripture, or even perhaps discussing nice points of theological or textual difficulty, with less severity and more freedom than the proprieties of the pulpit allow. The fashion of the ancients in this respect lives vividly before us still in the 'Banquets' of Plato and Xenophon; and how closely the Romans here, as in less laudable matters, followed their Greek examples, is sufficiently indicated by Macrobius, Suetonius, and Gellius.<sup>1</sup> To a sharp-witted people like the Greeks, these bouts of intellectual fence, and exercises of critical hair-splitting, really became an essential part of the dessert, the "*secundarum mensarum τραγύματα*," as the philosopher Taurus called them to the company of learned men whom he was wont to entertain at his Athenian villa. But it was not only philosophers who delighted in such play of wit over their wine. Kings and exalted personages were fond of entertaining philosophers, scholars, and literary men, and had a delight, after dinner, in proposing to them knotty points to solve, and specially '*Ομηρικὰ ζητήματα*, or questions with regard to the meaning of obsolete Homeric words, or the significance of disputed passages. The Egyptian Ptolemies were remarkable for the delight which they took in these convivial encounters. Timon the Phliasian, who was honoured with the friendship of Philadelphus, and who never spared either prince or peasant when the sarcastic vein flowed, talking of the learned men at the Alexandrian Court, said—

<sup>1</sup> *Macrob. Saturn.* vii. 1; *Sueton.* to which add *Suidas*, in *ἐκκένωθεν τὴν Τίβεραν*, 70, *De Illust. Grammat.* c. 11; *μουσικήν*.  
*Gell. Noct. Att.* vi. 13, and xviii. 2;

“ The king of Egypt keeps in learned cages  
 His bookish wits, who wrangle evermore,  
 And fight as fiercely over Homer’s pages,  
 As e’er did Peleus fervid son of yore,  
 Raging o’er fields bedrench’d with Trojan gore.”<sup>1</sup>

Some of these questions were idle enough, but the idle ones not seldom caused more amusement than the serious ; and on such occasions shallow impertinence sometimes received a rebuke which might be more effective than a sermon. Macrobius tells us of a slave, recently emancipated, who had suddenly acquired a great fortune, and who, in order to imitate the example of the great, gave a grand entertainment to a company of learned men, in the course of which, wishing to display his superiority to the minute questions which philosophers occasionally discussed, he asked the company,—Why soup of the same colour was made from black beans and from white ? and to this got back the answer which he deserved,—Can you tell us why straps of black and white leather produce the same sort of weals on a branded slave’s back ?<sup>2</sup> At other times a metaphysical question would be started, as that old one, *Ovumne prius fuerit an gallina?*<sup>3</sup>—whether the egg or the hen was first produced ? But of properly Homeric *ζητήματα*, such as were discussed at the Greek *συμπόσια*, we get the best notion from Plutarch, who, in his “ symposiacal questions,” gives us the following very characteristic specimens :—

“(1.) Why Nausicaa washed her clothes in the sweet water, not in the salt ?

“(2.) Why Achilles ordered pure wine to his guests in the embassy, and did not, according to the usual practice, mix it with water ?

<sup>1</sup> *Athenaeus*, 1. 22 D.

<sup>2</sup> *Saturn.* vii. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Saturn.* vii. 16.

“(3.) Why *μηλέαι* are called *ἀγλαόκαρποι* ?  
 “(4.) Why salt is called divine ?  
 “(5.) Why the poet, of so many liquids, applies the word *ἴγρις* only to oil ?  
 “(6.) Whether the Trojans, in Book III., were bound by the agreement ?  
 “(7.) Which hand of Venus was wounded by Diomede ?”<sup>1</sup>

So much for the positive side of the inquiry concerning the influence of Homer on Greek life, character, and opinion.<sup>2</sup> But there is a negative side also to this question. Not even Homer could be allowed for ever to sit on his own Greek throne, among his own Greek people, with undisputed title. His claims were pitched too high, and his friends not seldom too sweepingly dogmatic to allow of even a reasonable opposition being always successfully quashed ; for as to unreasonable opposition, this is always to be expected when eminent reason appears. Every dog must have something to bark at ; every Homer has to look for his Zoilus ;<sup>3</sup> and even Jove must tolerate Momus in some corner of Olympus. But it was not merely, or mainly, men of the Zoilus type who ventured to dispute the verdict of general Greece with

<sup>1</sup> Plutarch, *Quæst.* i. 9 ; v. 4, 8, 10 ; vi. 9 ; ix. 13, 14.

<sup>2</sup> The materials for the above remarks on the Greek symposiacal discussions were principally supplied by Lehr's *Aristarchus*, p. 213.

<sup>3</sup> The stigma which attaches to the name of Zoilus is a striking example of the important practical truth, that one glaring fault may do a man more harm in the world's repute than a dozen decent virtues can do him good. From the manner in which Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a critic and literary man by profession, speaks of Zoilus, and the company in which

he places him (*de Demosthen.* δεύτ. 167. 31, *Sylb.* ; and *Isæus*, p. 111, 41, do.), it would appear that Zoilus was by no means an unfair specimen of the class of men to whom he belonged. That he wrote a *καταδροῖη*, or violent invective against Plato, was, the same Dionysius justly remarks, nothing particular to his discredit (*Epist. ad Cn. Pomp.* 126. 44. *Sylb.*) ; for the great head of the academy dealt too publicly in very questionable paradoxes to escape the severe criticism of men of all varieties of opinion, from Aristotle to Landor. But the prominence which Zoilus chose to give

regard to the poet of the *Iliad*. Far otherwise. Among the list of the opponents of Homer we find some of the most eminent names in the history of Greek literature from Xenophanes down to Plato. The reason of this lies on the surface. The opposition arose out of that double character which the poet sustained among his countrymen, to which we have more than once had occasion to allude. Homer was the most authoritative theologian of the Greeks, as well as their most popular poet. The union in one person of functions so diverse as that of provider of secular entertainment and preacher of lofty religious truth, might satisfy an age of men simple in conception, of healthy nerve, cheerful temper, and gay fancy, but would present bristling points of offence to a later age fertile in intellects of curiously consistent speculation, and nicely sensitive conscientiousness. To such a generation the playful sport of the poet in little innocent arabesques of theological fancy would appear irreverent; the beautiful embodiments of a strong passionate instinct of the heart would, in not a few cases, seem contradicted by the sober conclusions of cautiously inductive or rigidly deductive reason; while the maxim that "the gods have their own

to Homer, as an object of critical animadversion and sophistical exercitation, could not so easily be forgiven. For this offence his name became proverbial as the impersonation of unreasonable cavil and malignant misrepresentation. This result, upon the whole, though no doubt his offence has been magnified, one cannot particularly regret. The class of men to whom he belongs, making, as they do, a sort of trade of finding fault with everybody, have no right to complain if everybody shall sometimes combine to find fault with them. Zoilus was a native of

Amphipolis in Thrace (hence Heraclides calls him *θρακικὸν ἀνδρόν*, p. 427, Gale), professed the Cynic philosophy, and was called the "cur of the orators." His general appearance was not remarkable for Grecian beauty; he had a long dependent chin, and closely cropped hair, and his dress was short and meagre. He was a contemporary of Isaeus (Aelian, *Var. Hist.* xi. 10; Suidas, in *Demosth.*), and flourished in the time between the Peloponnesian and Macedonian war. On his style of objection to Homer, see Lehr's *Aristarchus*, p. 206.

laws," which prevented so many a gross practical perversion of theological fable, might fail to satisfy men fixed on the contemplation of the grand fundamental unities of the universe, and profoundly aware how little such a maxim might be expected to operate in regulating the passions of an over-stimulated and feverishly excited generation. In the nature of things, it was impossible that a people whose sole Bible was a luxurious garden of the devout imagination, and whose great prophet was a secular bard, not much more moral sometimes than Ariosto, and having nothing of the chaste severity of Milton, should escape the fiery trial of a searching and a sceptical neology, so soon as the idea of purely intellectual law, and a reasonable necessity in all things, should have taken possession of some of the leading minds of an age whose great boast was philosophy, and whose favourite weapon was logic. At how early a period the Greek mind began to move in a direction which could not issue otherwise than in a direct antagonism to the received theology of the nation, and the great national poet, Greek names now of most familiar currency in the history of the human mind sufficiently declare; for whether, with Thales, who flourished not four hundred years later than Homer, we take water as the first principle of the universe, or number, that is, measure and proportion, with Pythagoras, or fire with Heraclitus, or the more exhaustive *νοῦς* of Anaxagoras, the friend of Pericles, we shall find that this eager search after an *ἀρχὴν*, under whatever disguise, naturally led to a recognition of the unity of the sempiternal creative energy, not easily to be harmonized with the belief in a celestial aristocracy, of which the supreme head was in feature and character only an exalted man, who had beyond question been born into the world of gods and men, which he now ruled, and who, in logical consis-

tency, might possibly die. There arose accordingly in Greece, at a very early period, what, borrowing a phrase from the most recent history of Christian theology, we may call a rationalizing reaction against the simple faith in the old Homeric theology ; and this reaction, as in modern times, took the twofold form either of direct attack on the sacred books of the country, as in the case of our English Deists and Freethinkers, or in various ingenious schemes of non-literal interpretation, by which the offence of the plain meaning of the popular text might be avoided. Among rationalists of the first class, the earliest, and, except Plato, the most notable, was Xenophanes of Colophon. This remarkable person, who flourished a little before the great Persian wars, and founded the Eleatic school of philosophy, was certainly a man of great independence and originality, and a thinker, whose leading doctrine of the oneness of the Universe, and the unity of the Deity, necessarily led him into conflict with the polytheistic theology of Homer. His scientific acuteness is specially attested to modern times by his remarkable anticipation of the great geological doctrine with regard to fossil fish, and other animals embedded in elevated strata,<sup>1</sup> and his decided and fearless opposition to Homer and his whole theological scheme is clearly brought out in some important fragments of his verses which still remain ; for, like all the distinguished men of those early times, before a prose style was generally cultivated, the sage of Colophon gave the fruits of his thought to the world in the form of didactic poetry. Of these the following are specimens :—

<sup>1</sup> The remarkable passage from *Græcorum veterum reliquias* (Amstelodami, 1830, vol. i.), in which work of geological science is contained, will be found in Karsten's *Philosophorum* also occur.

## I.

“ There is one God, supreme above all gods and men that be ;  
Not like a mortal thing in shape, nor like in thought is He.

## II.

“ O vain conceit, to ween that gods like men are born, and show  
Our human face, and use our speech, and in our garments go !

## III.

“ If sheep and swine, and lions strong, and all the bovine crew,  
Could paint with cunning hands, and do what clever mortals do,  
Depend upon it every pig with snout so broad and blunt,  
Would make a Jove that like himself would thunder with a grunt :  
And every lion's god would roar, and every bull's would bellow,  
And every sheep's would baa, and every beast his worshipp'd fellow  
Would find in some immortal form, and nought exist divine  
But had the gait of lion, sheep, or ox, or grunting swine.

## IV.

“ Homer and Hesiod, whom we own great doctors of theology,  
Said many things of blissful gods that cry for large apology,  
That they may cheat, and rail, and lie, and give the rein to passion,  
Which were a crime in men who tread the dust in mortal fashion.

## V.

“ All eyes, all ears, all thought is God, the omnipresent soul,  
And free from toil, by force of mind he moves the mighty whole.”

In these passages we see the most distinct and unequivocal protest against polytheism that classical literature contains, a protest certainly much more distinct than anything that we read in Plato, whose green memory of the hemlock-cup administered to Socrates, and bitter experience of an excited democracy, led him, no less perhaps than his natural temperament, quietly to undermine rather than violently

to assail the favourite superstitions of his country. It is, however, a striking proof of the general tolerance of the Greek mind, notwithstanding occasional outbreaks of bigotry, that Xenophanes, and many other known Free-thinkers, lived to a very advanced age, and died naturally, without any help from hemlock or trial by democratic jury. The religious persecutions of the Greeks and Romans, particularly of the Greeks, were merely fits, and these few and far between ; those of modern Europe, before Grotius and the Arminians taught Protestants the meaning of toleration, were as firm as Vulcan's vice, as unavoidable as the foot of the Furies, and as permanent as the pressure of the monarch's sceptre and the soldier's sword. Compared with our modern Servetus, Vanini, and Bruno, Xenophanes certainly exercised a wide license of tongue with impunity, as not only the above verses, but various anecdotes current among the ancients indicate. Aristotle, in his treatise on Rhetoric (ii. 23), tells us that the Colophonian said that those who taught that the gods were born, were not less impious than those who asserted, as the Cretans are reported to have said, of Jove, that he died ; for if either were possible, it follows that no such thing as gods exist. Again, we read that when the philosopher was asked by the people of Elea whether they ought to sacrifice to Leucothea, and practise the lamentations and wails customary in her worship, he replied, that if she was a goddess they should not lament, and if she was a mere woman they should not worship her. But Xenophanes was not the only thinker who in those days of early Greek speculation ventured publicly to pluck the orthodox polytheism of good old Homer by the beard. Heraclitus of Ephesus is reported to have said that the poet ought to be beaten with rods out of all the festal assemblies of the

Greeks, and Archilochus likewise.<sup>1</sup> About a century and a half later, when scepticism and heterodoxy were so rife in Athens as to have been sported openly by philosophizing dramatists through the convenient mask of tragic character,<sup>2</sup> Plato made his great systematic attack against the theological sovereignty of Homer, by formally condemning him as a religious teacher, and forbidding his works to be read in his model republic. This, of course, did not amount to a direct condemnation of all polytheism in the style of Xenophanes; for the gods might exist without Homer, in the same way that, as the Roman Catholics argue, Christianity would exist without the Bible; in effect, however, the man who stabs the monarch deals the heaviest blow at the monarchy; and so it proved here. The objections of Plato to Homer's treatment of the gods, are brought forward at great length in the second book of the 'Republic'; and as that work, except in the world of professed scholars, is not, I am afraid, very extensively read, even amongst well educated men, I shall insert at length one of its most remarkable paragraphs here:—

“ What then is the education to be ? Perhaps we could hardly find a better than that which the experience of the past has already discovered, which consists, I believe, in gymnastic for the body, and music for the mind.

“ It does.

“ Shall we not then begin our course of education with music rather than with gymnastic ?

“ Undoubtedly we shall.

“ Under the term music, do you include narratives, or not ?

“ I do.

“ And of narratives there are two kinds, the true and the false.

<sup>1</sup> Diog. Laert. ix. 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Of the inroads of philosophy upon the popular faith at the stirring epoch of Pericles, the most vivid picture is given in the *Timon* of Lucian, one of the most effective productions of that luxuriant and agreeable writer.

“ Yes.

“ And must we instruct our pupils in both, but in the false first ?

“ I do not understand what you mean.

“ Do you not understand that we begin with children by telling them fables ? And these, I suppose, to speak generally, are false, though they contain some truths : and we employ such fables in the treatment of children at an earlier period than gymnastic exercises.

“ True.

“ That is what I meant when I said that music ought to be taken up before gymnastic.

“ You are right.

“ Then are you aware, that in every work the beginning is the most important part, especially in dealing with anything young and tender : for youth is the season when any impression, which one may desire to communicate, is most readily stamped and taken.

“ Precisely so.

“ Shall we then permit our children without scruple to hear any fables composed by any authors indifferently, and so to receive into their minds opinions generally the reverse of those which, when they are grown to manhood, we think they ought to entertain ?

“ No : we will not permit it on any account.

“ Then apparently our first duty will be to exercise a superintendence over the authors of fables, selecting their good productions, and rejecting the bad. And the selected fables we shall advise our nurses and mothers to repeat to their children, that they may thus mould their minds with the fables even more than they shape their bodies with the hand. But we shall have to repudiate the greater part of those which are now in vogue.

“ Which do you mean ? he asked.

“ In the greater fables, I answered, we shall also discern the less. For the general character and tendency of both the greater and the less must doubtless be identical. Do you not think so ?

“ I do : but I am equally uncertain which you mean by the greater.

“ I mean the stories which Hesiod, and Homer, and the other poets, tell us. For they, I imagine, have composed fictitious narratives which they told, and yet tell, to men.

“ Pray what kind of fables do you mean, and what is the fault that you find with them ?

“ A fault, I replied, which deserves the earliest and gravest condemnation, especially if the fiction has no beauty.

“ What is this fault ?

“ It is whenever an author gives a bad representation of the characters of gods and heroes, like a painter whose picture should bear no resemblance to the objects he wishes to imitate.

“ Yes, it is quite right to condemn such faults : but pray explain further what you mean, and give some instances.

“ In the first place, the poet who conceived the boldest fiction on the highest subjects invented an ugly story, when he told how Uranus acted, as Hesiod declares he did, and also how Cronus had his revenge upon him. And again, even if the deeds of Cronus, and his son’s treatment of him, had been authentic facts, it would not have been right, I should have thought, to tell them without the least reserve to young and thoughtless persons : on the contrary, it would be best to suppress them altogether : or, if for some reason they must be told, they should be imparted under the seal of secrecy to as few hearers as possible, and after the sacrifice, not of a pig, but of some rare and costly victim, which might aid to the utmost in restricting their number.

“ Certainly, these are offensive stories.

“ They are ; and therefore, Adeimantus, they must not be repeated in our republic. No : we must not tell a youthful listener that he will be doing nothing extraordinary if he commit the foulest crimes, nor yet if he chastise the crimes of a father in the most unscrupulous manner, but will simply be doing what the first and greatest of the gods have done before him.

“ I assure you, he said, I quite agree with you as to the impropriety of such stories.

“ Nor yet, I continued, is it proper to say in any case—what is indeed untrue—that gods wage war against gods, and intrigue and fight among themselves ; that is, if the future guardians of our state are to deem it a most disgraceful thing to quarrel lightly with one another : far less ought we to select as subjects for fiction and em-

broidery, the battles of the giants, and numerous other feuds of all sorts, in which gods and heroes fight against their own kith and kin. But if there is any possibility of persuading them, that to quarrel with one's fellow is a sin of which no member of a state is ever guilty, such ought rather to be the language held to our children from the first, by old men and aged women, and all elderly persons ; and such is the strain in which our poets must be compelled to write. But stories like the chaining of Hera by her son, and the flinging of Hephaestus out of heaven for trying to take his mother's part when his father was beating her, and all those battles of the gods which are to be found in Homer, must be refused admittance into our state, whether they be allegorical or not. For a young person cannot discriminate between what is allegory and what is not ; and whatever at that age is adopted as matter of belief, has a tendency to become fixed and indelible ; and therefore we ought to esteem it of the greatest importance that the fictions which children first hear should be adapted in the most perfect manner to the promotion of virtue."<sup>1</sup>

This passage will put the modern reader into a position to estimate correctly the point of view from which men of earnest moral and religious convictions, like Plato, made their assaults on the authority of the great national poet. And it is impossible to deny that the statements which they made as to this matter are pregnant with the most striking truth, and must have exercised an immense influence in preparing the Greek mind for the reception of that pure form of religious truth which they were destined, in the face of all their vaunted wisdom, to receive from the small hill-tribes of the despised people of Palestine. Nevertheless, the direct

<sup>1</sup> Plato's *Republic*, translated by Davies and Vaughan (Macmillan, Cambridge, 1852), an excellent translation, certainly vastly superior to that in Bohn's library. Compare with this passage the immoral use of the Homeric mythology, so adroitly made by the *δόκιος λόγος* in Aristophanes (*Clouds* v. 1080), and Euripides (*Hippol.* 474). There is, indeed, hardly a vice practised by human beings, which a clever sinner, well read in Homer and Hesiod, might not plausibly justify by the argument, *Why should a mortal man attempt or pretend to be more virtuous than the gods?*

effect of these attacks, at the time when they were made, was much less than may naturally be imagined. What the philosophers wrote in those days, they wrote rather for a peculiar little world of thinkers than for the great masses of the people ; and even in our own times, when the press has made printed paper almost as cheap as spoken words, the real effect of any violent attack on received opinions, even from very influential quarters, is in every view much less than the apprehensions of sensitive orthodoxy might anticipate. All received opinion is a stiff growth, has a stout root, and will stand many rude wrenches before it shows signs of shaking ; besides that, in such cases, the assailants are generally driven, by their zeal, into some overpleading of their case.

— the most effective way of putting a sword into the hands of the champion of things as they are, which he may turn, with little trouble and immense applause, into the bowels of the innovator. So it happened even with the mighty Plato ; he overpleaded his cause most effectually, like the late Mr. Buckle, using the form of severe logic sometimes to draw most illogical conclusions, as any one may see from his argument against the possibility of divine incarnation that follows immediately on the passage just quoted. There was, indeed, in the whole tone and attitude of that philosopher, in reference not only to Homeric theology, but to the drama, and poetic art generally, something extremely narrow and one-sided, not to say pedantic, plainly indicating a despotism of the dialectic faculty, ready to override the natural province of the imagination, with as unjust a sway as that with which the imaginative theology of Homer had overwhelmed the sphere of reason. For these and other causes, the method of direct attack against the Homeric theology, used by Plato, met with small success, and found few imitators.

Policy as well as piety, and, in some cases, simple justice to the honest old minstrel, dictated a more gentle treatment—the treatment indicated by the philosopher in the last sentence of our extract,—the reconciliation of imagination and reason, by withdrawing the curiously-pictured veil which prevented the latter from recognising in the former the traits of a common fatherhood. In other words, if the literal interpretation of the poet were given up in favour of the method of *ὑπόνοια* or allegory, the strife between philosophy and poetry would cease, and orthodoxy and heterodoxy embrace each other. On this subject, therefore, a few observations will be necessary to conclude the present chapter.

The manner in which the ancient philosophers and critics handled Homer, after this allegoric method, will be best understood by an example. The great battle of the gods, in the twentieth book of the Iliad, where heaven and earth seem shaken out of their consistency, and ancient inorganic Chaos about to be restored, was naturally a stumbling-block to the pious among the Greeks ; and with good reason ; for if the gods fight as violently as men do, and tear one another to pieces, like tigers, with as much zest, why should mortals in their perplexity look for direction to a quarter where the same confusion reigns as here below, only on a more gigantic scale ? On the subject of this confounding *θεομαχία*, the old commentator of the Venetian Codex writes as follows :—

“ The whole representation of the gods in this book hath something about it apparently out of all taste and propriety. One cannot say that such a manner of talking about the gods is becoming. Now those who give themselves trouble to remove this offence, do it in several ways. The first way is by considering the nature of the style which the poet useth (*ἐκ τῆς λέξεως κατηγορῶν*). This they maintain is essentially allegorical, and hath reference to the elements

of the physical world, in which the principle of contrariety is everywhere evident ; for the dry manifestly warreth with the humid, the hot with the cold, and the light with the heavy. Do we not see daily that water extinguisheth fire, and that fire drieth up water ? So through the vast complex whole of things, a principle of hostility is at work, in virtue whereof the parts are continually destroyed, while the whole remaineth entire ; in allusion to which natural contrarieties the poet manifestly hath introduced his battles of the gods, calling fire by the name of Apollo and Helios and Hephaestus ; water, Poseidon and Scamander ; the moon Artemis ; the air Hera, and so forth. Sometimes also intellectual and moral qualities are plainly adumbrated by the gods, as when Athena signifieth wisdom ; Mars foolish and blind rage ; Aphrodite sensual pleasure ; Hermes eloquence, and the like. Now this method of showing the true sense of Homer by a consideration of his style is extremely ancient, having been used by Theagenes of Rhegium, the first who wrote about Homer.<sup>1</sup> But another class of interpreters do not think it necessary to say more in justification of the poet than simply this, that he followed the general custom in these matters ; for not only in poetry, but in the exhibition of the sacred mysteries, and in the votive offerings of the pious, and in the public processions—as in the case of the robe of Pallas embroidered with the battles of the giants, carried about at the Panathenæa—in these and other such matters, all the most religious Greek cities allowed such things to be said and done about the gods. A third class are of opinion that in these battles of the gods, the poet hath merely imaged forth in the celestial dynasty the same style of things that existed below ; for Greece at that time was universally governed by kings, who were frequently at war with each other ; and the distance between terrestrial and celestial sovereignty is diminished, when we see the Olympians acting on the same principles which move the hearts of human sovereigns."<sup>2</sup>

The allegorical style of interpretation, which holds the first place in this passage, is largely used in the 'Life of Homer,'

<sup>1</sup> See the passage of Tatian above, p. 82, note.

<sup>2</sup> *Schol. Venet.* Il. xx. ver. 67.

by an unknown hand, published by Gale. From this the following extract may suffice :—

“ When the poet maketh Hera the sister and wife of Jove, he plainly speaketh in allegory, for by Hera is signified the air or lower atmosphere, which is full of moisture, and by Jove the ether or upper atmosphere, which is of a dry and fiery nature. Now these two he calleth sister and brother, because of their contiguity, and also their likeness in quality, for they are characterized both by levity and mobility ; further, he maketh them husband and wife, because from their union all things are generated ; wherefore also he maketh them come together on Ida, and the earth produceth to them green herbs and flowers. The same signification evidently appertaineth to that fable, in which he saith that Jove suspended Hera from heaven, with two anvils hanging at her feet, that is, the earth and the sea. But chiefly the allegorical meaning of the great gods appeareth in what Poseidon saith to Jove, that Rhea bore three sons to Kronos,—Jove, and Pluto, and himself—and made a threefold division of the world, wherein each hath his separate lordship ; the upper region of fire being assigned to Jove, the waters to Poseidon, and the dark subterranean realm to Pluto. Furthermore, as Empedocles saith that the principles of things in the universe

‘ Sometimes in friendship unite and lovingly mingle together,  
Sometimes asunder stand, with hatred and hostile repulsion,’

and that all things are moved either by love or strife, so Homer, long before the philosopher, talked of the strife of Ocean and Tethys, which Hera went to assuage ; as also through the whole Iliad he constantly speaketh of the battles of hostile gods on adverse sides, that is, of diverse and contrary elements in nature.”<sup>1</sup>

Now there can be no doubt that the views set forth in these passages express the convictions of a very large proportion of the thoughtful readers of Homer in the best ages of Greece. We see indeed that, according to the Venetian scholiast, the allegorical style of commenting on Homer was

<sup>1</sup> Gale, *Homeri Vita*, p. 325.

known among the Greeks as early as Theagenes, the oldest name in the long history of Homeric literature, in the age of Cambyses. And, besides the general allusion of Plato to the *ὑπονοιαί*, there are not wanting incidental notices in other authors of the common use of this method by the Greek philosophers. Tzetzes, in the introduction to his commentary on the Iliad, tells us that Heraclitus of Ephesus, whom he calls ὁ δεινὸς, gave an allegorical interpretation, *φυσικῶς* and *ρητορικῶς*, of the whole Iliad and Odyssey.<sup>1</sup> In the passage of the 'Banquet' of Xenophon, already quoted, when the young man makes his boast of being able to repeat the whole of the Iliad and Odyssey by heart, he is reminded that this is no very notable accomplishment, for every vulgar rhapsodist can do the same, and the rhapsodists are not a class of men particularly remarkable for intelligence; whereupon Socrates, in his kindly way, remarks—"No doubt the rhapsodists are unintelligent, because they merely know Homer according to the letter, and are ignorant of the *ὑπόνοιαί*, or allegorical meaning of the passages; whereas Niceratus, the young man, has paid large sums to Stesimbrotus and Anaximander, and other learned men, for instruction in Homeric lore." We see from this passage, that as we have our professors of Biblical Criticism to interpret the Scriptures in our universities, so the Greeks had interpreters of Homer among their *σοφισταί* and literary men, who, in fact, were a wandering body of professors of eloquence and philosophy, travelling from city to city, and teaching that wisdom to which the Greeks were so devoted. Of Anaxagoras, the reputed master of Socrates, we are informed that he was the first who interpreted Homer with a special

<sup>1</sup> Tzetzes, *Exeg. Hom.* p. 4; published along with Draco's book on metres, by Hermann. Leipzig, 1812.

view to the doctrine of virtue and justice, which his poems teach; while Metrodorus, his contemporary and friend, directed his attention particularly to the physical interpretation of the poet.<sup>1</sup> Of the widespread operation of this allegorical science of Homeric hermeneutics, the practice of Philo, as a type of the learned Hellenizing Jews, and of the Fathers of the Greek Church, in interpreting the Scriptures, affords the strongest possible evidence. The seed must have been largely scattered, out of which so rich and abundant a crop grew. And, indeed, besides the popularity of such a method, as removing to educated minds the offence of many of the myths, there is nothing with which learned men are so apt to fall in love as with pretty conceits of their own invention. Homer might have the full credit of composing his own poetry, but the merit of expounding it belonged altogether to the commentator. For this reason, no doubt, partly, long after the necessity of defending the poet as a theologian had ceased, we find the allegories of Homer a favourite subject with the learned men of Constantinople. The famous John Tzetzes, who, whatever we may think of his taste, was a man of extensive erudition, dedicated a book of Homeric allegories to the Empress Irene, about the middle of the twelfth century; and in this book he boasts, that as Moses divided the waters of the Red Sea by his rod, so he, Tzetzes, was honoured by the majesty of Byzantium to strike the waters of Homeric song with the virtue of his eloquence, reveal the depths of its significance, and enable the unlearned reader to walk unscathed through an element in which he

<sup>1</sup> Diog. Laert. II. 3. 7. Hesychius, in early hint of the favourite doctrine of 'Αγαμέμνων, says, that "Agamemnon certain Germans, that all the heroes meant the ether;" of course because were gods. On the allegorical interpretation, see Lobeck, *Eleus.* sect. he was the same on earth that Jove was in Olympus. We have here an 20.

would otherwise have been submerged. Here is a specimen of his treatment of the concluding lines of the first book of the *Iliad* :—

“ Apollo is the sun, in sooth, a star, one of the planets,  
 The Muses are the other stars that with their leader wander.  
 Their number seven, and their names are what I now shall tell  
 you.

Kronos, in majesty the first, immortal Jove the second,  
 The third is Mars, the fourth the Sun, that in the middle standeth ;  
 Fifth Aphrodite, Hermes sixth, the Moon completes the circle.  
 These, in the fashion of a lyre with seven strings sweetly sounding,  
 In their appointed orbits wheel, and with a perfect concord  
 Send forth harmonious symphonies that thrill the sky with  
 pleasure.

Now Homer saith that after ocean's mist to heaven upmounted,<sup>1</sup>  
 Reign'd in high heaven harmonious peace until the sun de-  
 scended,  
 And with the dusk each heavenly power in his own chamber  
 rested,  
 By Vulcan made, the fire that breeds and finely shapeth all things ;  
 For fire, as learned Greeks do teach, doth in the great cosmogony  
 Give to each element its place, according to its virtue.  
 Strong heat doth make the liquid rare, and turns to air the water,  
 And by expansive power aloft the air to ether changeth,  
 And with the ether eke the stars, which fiery are in substance.  
 Thus all these elements did rest within their proper chambers,  
 And Jove himself did softly sleep with the clear and cloudless  
 ether.”<sup>2</sup>

Whether the erudite verse-manufacturer was here playing the part of a serious expounder, or only amusing himself, as

<sup>1</sup> He said before that *Thetis* means the sea, and that her going to Olympus means the rising of a sea-ninth.

<sup>2</sup> Tzetzes, *Allegor. Iliad* (Lutet. 1851. Boissonade), p. 83. The trans- lation is a fair sample of the slip-shod popular metre, iambic tetrameter catalectic, used by the Byzantine writers, and in the modern Romaic ballads. It has no rhyme.

ill-schooled divines sometimes do when they allegorize the Old Testament according to a typology of their own conceit, is of little consequence. All that I aim at here is to show the generality of the practice of allegorizing, and to give specimens of its different phases. Now, when we review these instances, we see plainly that they contain a certain nucleus of indubitable truth, along with a considerable amount of arbitrary and rather puerile fancies. It is true, and modern mythological science has proved it in the most satisfactory way, that Apollo means the sun, and that all the heathen mythology was originally a personification of the features and elements of the physical world; it is true also that there is a manifest moral significance in some of the Homeric deities; Pallas, for instance, as contrasted with Mars, representing vigorous and wise energy, as opposed to the mere wild tiger-like fury of passionate attack. She therefore, with manifest propriety, directs all the actions of the wise Ulysses, and checks the hand of the fierce Pelidan when he is being tempted to perpetrate a deed of rashness, for which no feats of valour, however brilliant, could have atoned. On these, and on the other grounds stated by the Venetian scholiast, the credit of the poet, even in delicate points of theology and morality, was long successfully defended by the literary men and philosophers of Greece. Even the severe Stoicks paid homage to his wisdom, and said, reasonably enough, independently of allegory, that Homer was not to be judged in all his utterances by an equally strict measure, and that common sense might teach a discriminating reader when the poet was to be taken as talking *κατ' ἀληθειαν*, according to absolute truth, and when *κατὰ δόξαν*, according to popular opinion. But all this concurrence of favourable patronizing influences was not sufficient in the

long run to maintain the position of the poet as a popular instructor in theology. There were not a few points of offence, such as that of Pallas inciting Pandarus to perjury, in Iliad IV., which no ingenuity could make consistent with the commonest rules of morality. The educated mind of Greece and Rome had long outgrown the crude polytheistic conception of the deity inwoven into the very substance of the Trojan and Ithacan traditions; and as to the unlettered masses, the remark of Plato, speaking as an earnest preacher of righteousness, was too true, that the allegorical explanations of the Homeric text, however they might please their ingenious authors, could not possibly be of the slightest use to that class of men who stood most in need of such an antidote. The force of this view could not but be felt by all those who really wished for the moral elevation of their fellow-men. Of this we have a striking example in a passage of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, where he compares the rich imaginative mythology of his own Greeks with the plain, severe, and sober religion of the ancient Sabines, by which so much Roman strength and manliness had been nourished—

“ Let no one suppose that I am ignorant that some of the Greek myths are useful to men, and that in various ways. One set of them contains an allegorical exposition of the phenomena of nature: others exhibit a picture of human life, tending to encourage and console the reader; a third set has a tendency to free the mind from vain anxieties, and to uproot unsound opinions; and others have obviously been invented for some other useful purpose. But well as I know this, I nevertheless would use the Greek myths with great caution, and prefer the Roman theology, considering both that the good and profitable things in our sacred legends are comparatively few, and that few must necessarily be always the men who profit by them: those only, of course, who have leisure and speculation to inquire into their proper drift and significance, — always a small

portion of any people. But the masses, untrained in the philosophical exercise of the mind, will always understand such allegories in the literal and gross sense, and they will not be able to escape the dilemma of either despising the theological myths altogether, as a mere vortex of superstitious fancies, or thinking themselves at liberty to commit all sorts of iniquity with impunity, seeing that the gods themselves neither abstain from any sort of vice practised among men, nor are superior to any the commonest sort of human weakness."<sup>1</sup>

These remarks are unanswerable. At the time when they were written, more than three hundred years before the final overthrow of polytheism, the days of Homer as a theologian for educated men were already numbered. A young enthusiastic Julian, rebounding from the pedantries or the severities of some Christians, more zealous than wise, might even, so late as the fourth century, easily work himself into the belief, or grow up in the conviction, that the verses of Homer were inspired by a much loftier morality than the texts of the Gospel. Imagination is a pleasant juggler at all times, and never more so than when she is assisting dexterous sophistry to defend the citadel of a doomed creed, whose outworks are already in the hands of the enemy. Men defend the last inch of ground round the shrine of a falling idol, as they cherish the fainting spark of life in the body of a dying mother. No man can blame such piety; but the result is certain. Neither tears, nor prayers, nor drugs can redeem the mother from death; neither learning, nor logic, nor idealistic raptures can save the faith from overthrow. Men will not continue long to stake their soul's peace on a creed which they only half believe, and believe only by help of philosophical subtleties and

<sup>1</sup> Dionys. Hal. *Rom. Arch.* ii. 20. Compare to the same effect the remark of Plutarch, *Peric.* 39.

ingenious imaginations. They must take a broad practical grasp of the plain reality of the thing, otherwise it can be no creed for them. So Homer the theologian was pushed more and more to the wall; the Fathers of the Christian Church, from the corners in which they had at first lurked, now marched boldly forth into the arena of intellectual controversy; and the Greeks found themselves beaten with their own weapons. A Clemens and a Basil might indeed be willing to let some kindly words drop on the cenotaph of the rare old poet; no man of sound judgment could deny that both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were full of the most valuable moral lessons, and were, on the whole, salubrious in tone and beneficial in tendency; but so soon as the grave question of religious authority and theological orthodoxy was started, there was no room for pious regards and kindly respects. When matters were brought to this issue, then the more attractive the poetry the more dangerous the poet; for the devil is never more to be feared than when he uses the charm of sweet song and the grace of accomplished speech. Then an Augustine, as hard and as fervid as glowing iron, would tell them roundly that their more than human Homer was only "*dulcissime vanus*,"—*very sweetly empty*;<sup>1</sup> and a Tatian could place before them the unavoidable alternative—Either your gods are such as they are represented, and then they are devils; or, if they are only the elements of physical nature, then you are worshipping what you do not mean to worship, and what no man would worship, if he worshipped with a reasonable conviction.<sup>2</sup> Pressed by such unequal forces, Homer could keep his ground no longer against Moses and the Prophets, as the preacher of a reasonable religion: he must be content to enjoy immortality only as a pure

<sup>1</sup> *Confessiones* 1. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Orat. ad Gentes*, 21; Otto, p. 92.

painter of human manners, and a model of natural simplicity, to a race ever prone, in the chase after glittering novelties, to forget eternal truth, and in the hotbed of a forced refinement, to shoot beyond the proportions of a healthy growth. The theology in which one of the most happily constituted of human races once fervently believed, and from which in their best days they derived an amount of devout nutriment now difficult to realize, survives only in a fair world of phantoms, to serve the pleasant banter of the humorist, to fire the fancy of the poet, or to grace the corridors of some Papal or Imperial museum.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For the materials of the latter half of this chapter, I am under great obligation to Græfenhahn, *Classischen Philologie im Alterthum* (Bonn, 1843, vol. i.) and Lauer's *Notizen* to Græfenhahn, *Geschichte der merische Poesie*. Berl. 1851.

## DISSERTATION IX.

### ON THE PRESERVATION OF THE POEMS OF HOMER, AND THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE EXISTING TEXT.

WHEN the slashing swordsman and strong dictator of English scholarship, Richard Bentley, had flung abroad on the learned world a proposal for a new edition of the Greek Testament, in which the hereditary claims of the Vulgate, founded on chance authority and influential currency, being disregarded, an entirely new text based on scientific canons should be constituted, he excited no small alarm in the minds of many learned and pious persons; especially when, on being elected Professor of Theology in Cambridge, he announced, in a public lecture, as one of the fruits of his Biblical studies, that he considered the famous text in the First Epistle of John (v. 7) spurious, and would, in all probability, give it no place in his revised edition. Among other objections to the excision, one correspondent argued strongly the necessity of retaining a verse, the ejection of which would be no small discouragement to orthodoxy, and afford a triumph to the Unitarians.<sup>1</sup> The feelings entertained by this correspondent, in reference to this passage of the New Testament, may be taken as a fair index of the attitude of the generality of mankind with regard to all current and

<sup>1</sup> Monck's *Life of Bentley*, p. 349.

generally received literary documents. There is a natural feeling, compounded of ignorance, piety, and sloth, which forbids the disturbance of the recognised text. It seems a cruel thing when a man has had a favourite quotation of a favourite author for half a lifetime in his mouth, to be told by some curious blinkard, prowling among yellow papers, that the beloved passage is a pure delusion, that it is not found in the oldest manuscripts of the author, and that the quoter might as well cite himself as the imaginary Shakespeare or St. Paul on whom he has been building. For persons who feel conscious that they rest upon some transmitted book, as a mason or a slater stands on a wooden scaffold, the intimation that the book is not altogether trustworthy in its text is like striking away the foundation of their intellectual existence. Knock down the prop, and plump falls the man. But natural as this feeling is, being the offspring of ignorance, it admits of an easy and effective cure by the simple communication of knowledge; and the knowledge thus readily supplied will cause apprehensions and fears to yield to enlightened conviction and healthy confidence. As mountains always look largest when looming through mist, and the Swiss Matterhorn was deemed inaccessible till it was actually ascended, so the various readings of the original text of the New Testament, counted as they are by hundreds and by thousands, are a source of discomfort to the devout student of the Scriptures only so long as they are not narrowly looked at. When once their nature is known, the wonder will not be how, amid such multitudinous discrepancies, any certainty in historical theology can exist, but rather how intellectual men, having but a few years to use their brains in this ephemeral life, should choose to drain their choicest sap on such barren and gritty studies. On inspecting

a few chapters of Lachmann's New Testament, for instance, one soon becomes convinced that whatever may be the utility or the pleasure of burrowing among manuscripts, to minds of a certain character and with a certain training, there is no doctrine of orthodox theology that can in anywise be affected by such investigations, nothing of new light on the most important subjects to be acquired, nothing of the old refreshing influences to be dried up. An Alexandrian, a Vatican, and a Sinaitic manuscript may conspire to eject from its familiar seat in the Gospel of St. John, the very beautiful and eminently Christian story of the woman taken in adultery. Such a cruel excision is sad, and deserves the passing tear; but the Gospel of John remains; and the loss of one bead will not damage a necklace whose pearls are all pure, and not counted by units. But it is very rarely that the pruning-knife of the Biblical critic has to perform its harsh function by lopping off a capital beauty of this kind. For the most part a mere variety in the position of the words, or in the method of spelling, in the presence or omission of the article, or a change in some insignificant epithet, is all the fruit that weeks and months consumed in the laborious work of comparing old manuscripts can boast of; and when we find a learned man like Wetstein devoting his whole life to the comparison of such insignificant variations of the Greek text as our New Testament exhibits, we are inclined almost to withhold our pity from him when we find him complaining that, after long years spent in adjusting the sacred text, he had got as his reward only "weak eyes and a disqualification for every other pursuit."<sup>1</sup> But we must not allow ourselves to pronounce a condemnatory judgment of this kind from a hasty consideration of the

<sup>1</sup> Monck's *Life of Bentley*, p. 430.

meagreness of the positive gains of these studies in the hands of those who cultivate them. To the world the negative results are of the utmost consequence. The textual student, we shall assume, has made no discovery that in respect of intellectual insight and survey may reward him for his hours of grim toil expended on the moth-eaten parchment ; he has no big nugget of gold to show, that men will deem a just reward for the ragged nails and the bleeding fingers which he has got by scraping in the sand. But the Christian world knows, with a confidence which otherwise were impossible, that the book which contains the charter of its inheritance has lived through centuries, undamaged in all essentials, whether from the blundering of ignorant copyists, or the falsification of unscrupulous partisans. The sedulous hunt after various readings in the sacred text has ended most barrenly, but most happily, in the proof that there are few or none of any profound significance or pregnant interest to be found.

As respects the classical writers, few readers of Greek are unaware, that in the case of not a few important authors, the literary booty to be got from a chase through manuscripts is more valuable. Not a few choruses, for instance, of the tragedies of *Æschylus*, which, in the edition of Victor, published more than three hundred years ago, give no sense, are now so happily restored, partly by a wise use of the manuscript authorities, partly by those happy flashes of conjecture which commend themselves for certainty, that they can be read as easily as any passage of common Greek. But it is not so with Homer. Here, no doubt, as in the case of all transmitted records, we have a fair store of various readings ; but in the heathen Bible, which Homer was, we have the same phenomenon presented as in the Christian New Testament.

The various readings seldom or never affect the sense seriously. The reason of this seems to have been, partly the extreme clearness and intelligibility of Homer's style, partly the popularity of his poems and the great veneration in which they were held. A book which is in everybody's hands, and which everybody wishes to have as pure and correct as possible, cannot, in the nature of things, be subject to perversions of the text in the same way as an obscure and little read book. Not to mention the more conscientious accuracy of a copyist, in transcribing a document where a thousand eyes were ready to point out his blunders, a gross error accidentally made in one copy by a careless transcriber is sure to be corrected by a careful reader from some other copy. In order to make the general reader understand how little real change in the text of the Iliad has been made, since the earliest printed editions to the great recension of Wolf in 1785, and the most recent edition by Bekker in 1858, I will set down here a few results of comparisons made for this purpose.

The following two columns exhibit all the variations in Iliad 1. which I observed between the recent text of Bekker and that of the Aldine edition of 1504, which is one of the most ancient of the printed editions :—

ΑΛΔΙΣ.	ΒΕΚΚΕΡ.
VER. 11. ἡτίμησ'	ἡτίμασεν
19. εἴ δ' οἴκαδε	καὶ Φοίκαδε
20. λύσατε	λύσατε τε
25. ἀφίει	ἀφίη
64. εἰποι	Φείπη
91. ἐνὶ στρατῷ	Ἄχαιῶν
97. λοιμῷ βαρείας χείρας	Δαναοῖσιν ἀΦεικέα λογοῖ
ἀφέξει	ἀπώσει
168. ἐπὴν κεκάμω	ἐπεί κε κάμω

ALDUS.	ΒΕΚΚΕΙ.
VER. 163. <i>μὴν</i>	<i>μὲν</i>
169. <i>ἐπείη</i>	<i>ἐπει ἦ</i>
193. <i>ἐως</i>	<i>εἰς</i>
204. <i>τετελέσθαι</i>	<i>τελέεσθαι</i>
277. <i>Πηλείδη θελ'</i>	<i>Πηλείδη ἔθελ'</i>
284. <i>κῆδος</i>	<i>κῦδος</i>
291. <i>προθέουσιν</i>	<i>προθέωσιν</i>
314. <i>ἔβαλον</i>	<i>ἔβαλλον</i>
342. <i>όλοιγσι</i>	<i>όλοιγῆσιν</i>
350. <i>οίνοπα</i>	<i>ἀπείρονα</i>
393. <i>ἔησ</i>	<i>ἔησ</i>
404. <i>Αἰγαίον</i>	<i>Αἰγαίων'</i>
435. <i>προέρυσσαν</i>	<i>προέρεσσαν</i>
444. <i>ἱλαστρωμεσθα</i>	<i>ἱλασόμεσθα</i>
446. <i>δὲ ἐδέξατο</i>	<i>δὲ δέ δέξατο</i>
519. <i>ὸνεδίοις</i>	<i>ὸνεδείοισι</i>
534. <i>ἐδέων</i>	<i>ἐδρέων</i>
543. <i>νοήσεις</i>	<i>νοήσης</i>
548. <i>τόν γ'</i>	<i>τον</i>
598. <i>ψυνοχόει</i>	<i>Φοινοχόει</i>

Now, these textual discrepancies, though of various kinds, some of them obvious misprints, as *κῆδος* for *κῦδος*, arising perhaps out of the Itacism of the Byzantine pronunciation, some of them running flagrantly in the face of the laws of poetical measure, since Bentley's time so familiar to scholars; some of them mere minute mistakes in matters of dialectic idiom and syntactic structure; others, perhaps, no mistakes at all, but mere learned fancies of the most recent German grammarian, which his immediate successor may disown; and though in the editing of the Greek text the most minute of these points must be accurately attended to (for there is a right and a wrong in the smallest matters, and often the more minute the more difficult of decision), yet there is scarcely a sixth part of them that in

any way affects the sense, and in these few cases the diversity of phrase is so insignificant that neither poetical force nor poetical fact suffers much from the variation. The only variant, indeed, that a reader of thought and taste will feel touched by, is that in ver. 350, where the *oīvōra, wine-coloured*, applied to the sea, and found in Aldus, Cephalæus, Turnebus, and the old editions generally, has been changed by Bekker into *āπeīpōra, boundless*, either because he thought Aristarchus infallible (which he certainly was not), or because, with the pruriency of verbal change often observed in textual critics, he prefers a dubious alteration of the Vulgate to no alteration at all.

In a similar way I compared the third book of the Iliad, according to the text of Wolf, with the Florentine text of 1488, the first printed edition of Homer,<sup>1</sup> and I found, among twenty-two variants, only one which affected the sense. This one also, as in the previous case, was an epithet (v. 126); and it is of the very slightest significance whether the mantle mentioned in this verse be *πορφυρένη, purple*, as in the recent editions, or *μαρμαρένη, glistering, shining*, as in the Florentine, Aldus, Cephalæus and Turnebus. So much for the verbal discrepancies of the printed editions of the last four centuries, of which the Florentine text may well be considered to represent generally a text of Homer extensively current in the middle ages. And if not content with contrasting the results of accurate verbal scholarship in this domain during the dynasty of printing-presses, we desire to know whether the ancient readers of Homer had any more serious discrepancies before them in their written texts than we discover in our printed ones, the famous Venetian

<sup>1</sup> There is a copy of this beautiful book, in excellent preservation, in the University Library, Edinburgh; another in the Advocates' Library.

Scholia, disentombed by Villoison from the library of St. Mark, are before us,<sup>1</sup> and from these we can see at a glance what the textual varieties were on which the Alexandrian critics in the days of the Ptolemies exercised their ingenuity. Turning to these Scholia, in the first book, we find that Zenodotus, ver. 159, for *ἀρνύμενοι* read *ἀρνύμενος* in the singular, a tasteless correction, and prejudicial to the effect of the passage; but which we notice specially to show that the various readings mentioned in these Scholia were often not real discrepancies found in the current copies of Homer, but only crotchety fancies of scholars, or erudite conjectures, such as Bentley in his grand random style flung into Horace, and repented of some good part of them before he wrote his Preface.<sup>2</sup> These readings, as peculiar to Zenodotus, were rejected by the ancients generally, pretty much as a modern editor of Shakspeare, after a careful examination of the old quartos and folios, would reject much of the ingenious conjectural emendation that was expended on our great dramatist by the wits of the last century. Sometimes, indeed, we may be at a loss to know whether the reading of one of these Alexandrian commentators stood on conjecture or on a firm basis of manuscript authority, and in such cases, as where in the remarkable passage of the Iliad, i. 400, Zenodotus read *φοίβος Ἀπόλλων* for *Παλλάς Ἀθήνη*, we may feel it impossible to decide the true reading at this time of day on any satisfactory grounds. But the cases in which the sense is seriously affected by the variants of these Ptolemean scholars will still remain extremely few. The same may be said of the discrepancies of the text observed in quotations from Homer by the ancient classics. These will generally

<sup>1</sup> *Homeri Ilias*. Villoison. Venet. 1788.

<sup>2</sup> Monck's *Life of Bentley*, p. 245.

be found noted in Spitzner,<sup>1</sup> and, where they possess any significance to the non-professional reader, will be alluded to in our notes. But neither in these quotations, nor in the readings of Zenodotus and Aristarchus, do the mere verbal discrepancies ever assume a formidable aspect in relation to the interpretation of Homer. What really bulks largely in the eye of the accurate student, is not the various readings of the received text, but the prior consideration, whether whole lines and whole passages are to be expunged from the text, or allowed to remain. In other words, the only critical question which seriously forces itself on the consideration of the general student of Homer, is the question of alleged interpolations. To the consideration of these, therefore, we now proceed.

That all written documents which go through a long process of literary tradition are liable to interpolation, arising partly from accidental causes, partly from designed adulteration, is so evident that any special proof is unnecessary. The sentence of Macrobius with regard to the organism of Homer's style —“*tria haec ex aequo impossibilia judicantur, vel Jori fulmen, vel Herculi clavam, vel versum Homero substrahere*”<sup>2</sup>— must be regarded as a mere compliment to the poetic genius of the minstrel; for not only is his style the farthest possible removed from that close compactness to which such a simile would apply, but a very superficial inspection of the commentaries of the Alexandrian critics must have taught any man of common education, in those Roman times, that there were many verses, and whole paragraphs, in the vulgate

<sup>1</sup> *Homeri Ilias*. Recensuit et brevi annotatione instruxit Francis Spitzner, 1832,—an edition remarkable, not more for minute grammatical ac-

curacy than for sobriety of view and soundness of judgment.

<sup>2</sup> *Natural* v. 3.

text of the Iliad, which could be cut out without the slightest injury, nay, rather sometimes to the manifest advantage of the text. In the same manner, it is scarcely possible for a student of the Bible at the present hour to read certain parts of the Old Testament intelligently, without being made aware that certain pieces which now hang together externally have no real coherence; as in the familiar example of the sixtieth psalm, where the last seven verses have no connexion with the preceding five, and have evidently been transferred by some blunder of the temple-singers or scribes from Psalm cviii. 7, to which they naturally belong. But, though all books are subject to interpolation, or, to use a gentle word applying more accurately to the example just quoted, mis-arrangement of their parts, all books are not liable to this accident in the same degree. And in judging of the authenticity of our present Homeric text, the great importance will now appear of the examination into the personality of Homer and the unity of the Iliad, with which the previous discourses were occupied. For it is manifest that short compositions, without any known author—like the majority of our Scottish ballads, and like many of the psalms which go under the name of David—will be more likely to suffer damage from a long perambulation through the centuries, than a great work of a known master, or a body of laws like the Twelve Tables, on which the eyes of a deeply interested people are constantly fixed. Apply this observation to the Iliad, as it is assumed by the German critics to have been gathered into a clumsy appearance of unity, and the utter untrustworthiness of the text of that great work in its present shape becomes self-evident. From beginning to end, the Iliad, according to this theory, must be looked on as a congeries of interpolations; and the art of the critic will

consist in a constant system of excision, by which the incongruous parts are lopped off, and the oldest and genuine fragments made to stand out in their original independence. But so soon as we fling this sceptical figment aside, the authority of our present Homeric text is seen to stand on a very different and altogether trustworthy basis. If there existed a great national poet, and a great national poem, there can be no doubt that the preservation of such a work would become a matter of supreme concern to the whole Greek people, and that this preservation would be effectively achieved, either by means of writing, as seems more probable, or by a regular school of professional minstrels, who made their bread by singing these poems at the domestic entertainments and public festivities of the Hellenes. A special proof of the existence of such a school of minstrels, who trained their memory for professional uses, as lawyers train their tongues, seems scarcely necessary, for they appear in all countries, at a certain stage of civilisation, as the great organs of public instruction; and their position in ancient Greece is sufficiently prominent, both in the Iliad and Odyssey, in the Homeric Hymns,<sup>1</sup> and in the position in later times held by the *ῥάψοδοι*, the acknowledged successors of the ancient *αοιδοι*. Of these rhapsodists, or "laudators of Homer," as Plato calls them,<sup>2</sup> there is a very interesting notice in a scholium to the opening lines of one of Pindar's odes; and that in connexion with the *'Ομηρίδαι*, or "sons of Homer," who are frequently mentioned by ancient writers as having their seat in the island of Chios. The great Theban lyrist, in his second Nemean Ode, congratulates the victor whose praises he sings, on having

<sup>1</sup> *Hym. Del. Apol.* 165-175.

<sup>2</sup> οὐ τέχνη ἀλλὰ θείᾳ μοίρᾳ Ὁμήρου δεινὸς εἰ ἐπαινέτης.—*Ion*, 536 v.

imitated the Homeridæ, in commencing with Jove, in these terms :—

'Οθεν περ καὶ 'Ομηρίδαι  
 'Ραπτῶν ἐπέων τὰ πόλλ' ἀοιδοὶ  
 'Αρχονται Διὸς ἐκ προοιμί-  
     ον' καὶ ὅδ' ἀνὴρ  
 Καταβολὰν ἱερῶν ἀγώνων  
 Νικαφορίας δέδεκται πρώ-  
     τοι, Νεμεαίον  
 'Εν πολυῦμνήτῳ Διὸς ἄλσει.

On which the scholiast remarks : “ Homeridæ they called anciently those who, being of Homer's race or clanship (*γένος*), sang his poetry in succession (*ἐκ διαδοχῆς*) ; afterwards this was done by the rhapsodists, who had no family connexion with the poet. Among the Homeridæ, Cynaethus was one of the most conspicuous, who, they say, interpolated many of his own verses into the body of Homer's poetry. This Cynaethus was a Chian, and is reported to have composed that one of the Homeric hymns which is inscribed to Apollo.”<sup>1</sup> Now, with regard to these Homerids, we shall wisely abstain, with Bernhardy, from spinning curious speculations which may seem to make us know what in reality we have no materials for knowing ;<sup>2</sup> but so much we may certainly conclude, that on the Asiatic coast of the Ægean,

<sup>1</sup> Harpocration, in his rhetorical dictionary, has a well-known passage perfectly parallel : 'Ομηρίδαι : Ἰσοκράτης Ἐλένη. 'Ομηρίδαι γένος ἐν Χίῳ, διπερ Ἀκουσίλαος ἐν γ', Ἐλλάνικος ἐν τῷ Ἀτλαντιδὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ ποιητοῦ φησιν ὄνομάσθαι. Σέλευκος δὲ ἐν β' περὶ θίλων ἀμαρτάνειν φησι Κράτητα νομίζοντα ἐν ταῖς λεπτοῖς οὐαῖς 'Ομηρίδας ἀπογόνους εἶναν τοῦ ποιητοῦ ὄνομάσθησαν γὰρ ἀπὸ τῶν ὄμηρων, ἐπειδὴ γυναικές ποτε τῷ Χίῳ ἐν Διονυσίοις παραφρονήσασαι εἰς μάχην

ἡλθον τοῖς ἀνδρσι, καὶ δύντες διλήλαις δημητρίους καὶ νυμφας ἐπαύσαντο, ὡν τοὺς ἀπογόνους 'Ομηρίδας λέγουσιν. The etymological part of this account is, of course, nonsense. Suidas mentions Παρθένιος, another of those Chian Homerids.

<sup>2</sup> “ Es ist unmöglich die poetischen Verhältnisse der Chier Homeriden zum persönlichen Homer, und zu seinen Dichtungen irgend zu bestimmen.”— *Griechische Litteratur*, vol. i. p. 229.

the native country of Homer, and the chief scene of his minstrel wanderings, neither his name nor his poems were forgotten ; on the contrary, that there was a society of persons at Chios, whether connected with the poet by blood, or belonging merely to a sort of poetical guild, meeting under the headship of Homer, as the Goethe Society in Germany does under that of Goethe, but in either case a fellowship of Chioites, cultivating the Muses, and actively concerned for the honour of Homer and the integrity of his writings, as our Shakspeare Society is in England for the honour of our great dramatist. That there was a strong influence here at work for the preservation of the Homeric writings, of which the Wolfians, in their high-handed way, take no account, seems to me evident. But we must not deceive ourselves by imagining that any such clannish or corporate association could altogether prevent the various corrupting influences to which popular poems, in an uncritical, unlettered, and unsuspecting age, were peculiarly exposed. The rights of individual authorship were then little known, and loosely guarded ; and the reciters of the separate cantos of the Iliad, having for their main object the entertainment of their immediate audience, would drop what seemed unsuitable to the occasion, or add what served their purpose, with as little conscience as a stage-manager feels when he adapts a play for representation. Any loss of original Homeric matter suffered in this way would easily be repaired by the presence of the dropt passage in other copies ; but the additions made by the wandering reciter might readily remain unquestioned, and in course of time pass current, as part of the original Homeric work. For the place in whose honour the interpolated verses were made would immediately acquire a direct interest in stamping them as genuine ; and

if it was a populous and an influential city, the capital of a large district, a number of copies would quickly get into circulation, in which the grateful addition appeared. And as there is not the slightest probability that there was in those earliest ages any standard edition to which all others could be referred, the spurious paragraph would walk at large without the possibility of detection, the more so that the style of Homer was a style to which every minstrel was professionally trained, and could use without the necessity of any conscious adaptation. There would be, therefore, no danger of an interpolation being detected by any of those tests which were employed so triumphantly by Bentley in his anatomy of the Epistles of Phalaris, and by Malone in his celebrated exposure of the Shakspeare forgeries. All evidence of interpolation in the Homeric poems, whether external or internal, must, from the very nature of the case, in the first two hundred years at least, be wanting. Interpolations, therefore, it must be presumed, did unquestionably exist to some considerable extent in the Homeric rhapsodies collected for Athenian use by Pisistratus. And in all such cases of unsifted literary material, we may feel assured the determinating element will be found in that reverence for authority, and respect for what stands written, which is natural to men, and by virtue of which whatsoever passages in a great national writer cannot certainly be proved to be false, will popularly be held to be true.

The next step in the authentication of our present Homeric text is indicated by the name of Pisistratus. What was the nature of his work in reference to the text of the poet, and what were the conditions of the new phase of tradition into which it now entered ? A single sentence will answer this question. Of the Homeric operations of Pisistratus we know

nothing beyond what was stated in a previous part of these discussions.<sup>1</sup> He collected the scattered rhapsodies, and with the aid of some of the *φιλόλογοι*, or literary men of his day, arranged them in their natural order, and, to use modern language, published the whole as an edition. How admirably he performed this task the present order amply witnesses, an order which, during a course of more than two thousand years, the judgment of the wise, the opinion of the people, and the objections of the learned have equally tended to confirm. The unity which has been able so triumphantly to maintain its ground, is justly ascribed to the constructive genius of the original poet rather than to the skilful combination of careful editors. This unity the assessors of Pisistratus had diligence enough to recover, and sense enough to discern. Beyond this there is no reason to suppose that they either did or were in a condition to do anything for the text of the poet. The Greeks of the sixth century before Christ were no more prepared to put forth a critical recension of the text of Homer, than St. Paul was to do the work of Origen, or Luther to anticipate Tischendorf. Language is one of the latest of all the products of human reason to occupy the thoughtful attention of human reasoners ; and the science of testing and interpreting written records cannot come into existence till these records have accumulated into imposing masses, and more attractive and pleasing fields of intellectual exercise have been exhausted. Nearly two centuries after the time of Pisistratus, when the rich intellect of Greece was still blossoming out in new forms of literary efflorescence, we find only the faintest traces of a systematic study of language—not even the germs of a great critical school. The sophists, of course, as they were called, or professors of knowledge in

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*. pp. 199, 216.

general, and of the art of public speaking in particular, did not omit to employ their sharp wits sometimes on the wonderful tool they were constantly using. The etymological studies of Prodicus of Ceos, the author of the beautiful analogue of the choice of Hercules, often appear in the dialogues of Plato. Protagoras of Abdera, another familiar character on the same dialectic stage, wrote a work on *ὅρθοέπεια*, and first distinguished genders in nouns. Democritus, the atomist, wrote a treatise *περὶ Ὀμήρου γλωσσῶν*; and a saying of Antisthenes the Cynic is quoted, to the effect that the study of words is the great postulate of all higher culture. Nay, the great architect of all reasoned imaginations, Plato himself, wrote a separate treatise on the origin and significance of words, which even now rewards the study of the philosophic philologer. But all these random casts, so to speak, only prove that there was no regular critical science in those days; that a revision of the text of Homer on any scientific principle was not yet possible. Had such a work been possible for any Greek, in the strictly Athenian period of Hellenic literature, Aristotle was the man, who, with a few strong and firm lines, would have sketched the first principles of the new science. But he has not done so. He laid the foundation-stone of natural science, of logic, of metaphysics, and of rhetoric; but of the critical handling of written documents he says not a word. The science of which his encyclopædic intellect knew not even the rudiments, it were ridiculous to suppose that Pisistratus had mastered. The utmost we can presume of his Homeric text is that it was honestly formed from a comparison of the best documents that happened to come into his hands, and that, through the literary influence of Athens, his recension, if we may so abuse the word, became the vulgate, or most

generally recognised text of Homer, for the whole Hellenic world.<sup>1</sup> But a vulgate text, as the history of scholarship largely proves, is always more or less the growth of circumstances and the product of chance; and whatsoever is so produced can never stand the test of exact science. The Homer of Pisistratus might be good enough for all ordinary purposes, but, put together as it was, could not fail to reveal serious flaws, so soon as the same severe and subtle Greek intellect, which had already been exercised on the forms of thought and the frames of organic life, should be applied to the scrutiny and the appraisal of books. This took place about a century afterwards, under the dynasty of the Ptolemies, in Alexandria. In that city, accordingly, the first strictly critical edition of the text of Homer was published. Let us now direct attention to the men by whose agency this work was performed, and the principles on which they proceeded.

The Ptolemies, from the first birth of their dynasty under the son of Lagus, were a race of sovereigns peculiarly distinguished by that love of letters and passion for all wisdom, so characteristic of the Greeks. Philadelphus, the second of the family, succeeded to the throne in the year 283 B.C., and distinguished himself by the establishment of that grand literary and scientific society, the Museum,<sup>2</sup> which has served as a model, or at least stood forward as a harbinger, to so

<sup>1</sup> This idea, that the recension of Pisistratus became the vulgate text of the poet, seems to me to arise necessarily from the position of Pisistratus as the head of the intellectual metropolis of Greece. Positive testimony for the fact I fear there is none. Grefenbahn (*Geeschichte Classich. Philol.* 1843, vol. i. p. 271) gives it, as the theory of Ritschl and Duntzer, than whom certainly no more weighty

names on such a point could be adduced.

<sup>2</sup> It is doubtful, however, if Ptolemy deserves *all* the credit of establishing this famous institution, Plutarch (*Adv. Epicur.* 1095 n, Πτολεμαῖος δὲ τράπεζος συναγαγών τὸ Μουσεῖον) being vague enough, and the passage in Athenaeus, v. 203 ε, being perfectly consistent with the previous existence of the institution.

many famous institutions of a similar kind in modern times. In his book on Egypt, which contains a detailed description of Alexandria, Strabo thus mentions the museum :—" Of the palace the museum is a part, containing public walks, an open portico, saloon, or summer-house, called ἐξέδρα, and a large hall, in which the scholars and literary men, members of the society (ἀνδρες φιλόλογοι), dine together. To the museum belong common funds, and the head of the establishment, appointed by the monarch, is a priest." This description, short as it is, brings graphically before us an ancient adumbration of some of the principal features of the English universities, a resemblance which has been often noticed.<sup>1</sup> The σύνταξις, or salary, which the learned men belonging to the society received (Athen. xi. 1.), reminds the meagre scholars of other countries not over pleasantly of the fat stalls in which the beneficiaries of the great English academical institutions are publicly fed. By the efficient aid of these enlightened Egyptian dynasts, men of such encyclopaedic grasp as Eratosthenes were enabled to pursue those severe studies, of which exact science is even now reaping the fruits. But what we have to do with here is, that ἀνδρες φιλόλογοι, or men occupied with literary research, are specially named as among the salaried members of the society ; and among these φιλόλογοι<sup>2</sup> were some of the very men, the

<sup>1</sup> See particularly the very interesting, instructive, and learned work of Mr. Kirkpatrick, entitled, *The Historical Conception of the University, with special reference to Oxford*. London, 1857 ; p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> The somewhat narrow range of minutely accurate verbal and metrical study, sanctioned by the examples of Bentley and Porson, has perhaps con-

tributed to give to the word *philology*, in this country, a limited meaning, which it does not possess in Germany, and certainly never could have possessed in Alexandria. The nice anatomy of mere words and verbal forms was only a very small part of what the Greeks understood under the very broad term *φιλολογία*. See, for its original untechnical use, Plato, *Thea-*

fathers of a long train of accomplished scholars, first in Alexandria, and afterwards in Pergamus and Rome, to whose erudite sedulousness we owe our present excellent texts of Homer and other Greek classics. Philetas of Cos, and others, distinguished both as original writers and sagacious critics, belonged to this body; but for our present purpose the only names necessary to be particularized are Zenodotus and Aristarchus.<sup>1</sup>

Zenodotus, the first of these eminent critics, was born at Ephesus. He studied Greek literature and criticism under Philetas, who flourished in the time of the first Ptolemy, and acted as tutor to Ptolemy II., to whose children Zenodotus afterwards performed the same duty. He acted as head librarian to the museum in Alexandria under Philadelphus, and devoted his life to literary exertion, principally as a critic and expounder of the Greek classics; what the ancients called *γραμματικός*. These few facts, which are all that is known of him, fix the period of his literary activity from 290 to 240 B.C.<sup>2</sup> His great achievement as a scholar was the recension of the text of Homer; hence he is celebrated as *πρῶτος Ὁμήρου διορθωτής*, "the first emendator of the Homeric text," standing thus pretty much in the same relation to the Greek Bible that Griesbach does to the text of our New Testament. This recension appears to have been under-

*tet.* 146 A; and for later usage, Justin Martyr, *Dial. cum Tryph.* 3, and Griesenbach, *Gesch. der Classischen Philologie*, vol. i. p. 72.

<sup>1</sup> On the Museum I have studied carefully the excellent work of Parthey (Berlin, 1838). To this may be added Beinhardy, *Gr. Litt.* i. p. 369. With these two writers I entirely agree that there is no need of supposing any formal compulsory teaching at the

Alexandrian school as in our universities. The formation of a school by voluntary social influence lay in the nature of the Greek mind, and in their traditions from Pythagoras downwards.

<sup>2</sup> Almost the only authority here is Suidas, *in voce*. All the points alluded to in the text are learnedly discussed in the very exact and judicious work of Dünzter, *De Zenodoti Studiis Homericis*, 1848.

taken by the learned librarian at the suggestion, or rather the injunction of Ptolemy. So at least an interesting scholium on Plautus, recently brought to light by the industry of the Germans, distinctly bears:—“*Alexander Aetolus et Lycophron Chalcidensis et Zenodotus Ephesius impulsu regis Ptolemaei Philadelphi cognomento, Græcas artis poeticos libros in unum collegerunt et in ordinem redegerunt, Alexander tragædias, Lycophron comædias, Zenodotus vero Homeri poemata et reliquorum inlustrium poetarum.*”<sup>1</sup> The second of the two great Homeric critics, who has in popular celebrity altogether eclipsed the fame of his predecessor, was Aristarchus. He was a Samothracian by birth; studied under Aristophanes of Byzantium, the same who gave fixation to the floating tones of Greek speech by the accentual marks now used in Greek books, and one of the librarians of the museum; and by the influence of this scholar seems to have been introduced to Ptolemy Philometor. He superintended the education of that monarch’s successor, Physcon, and succeeded in inoculating that bloated paunchy tyrant, half swine half tiger, with a certain love of letters, such as might at least serve to recreate him when he was exhausted with acts of cruelty and debauchery. These facts, as well as the dates given by Suidas and other authorities, place the great Alexandrian critic about the middle of the second century B.C., at the unhappy epoch when Greece, the mother of wisdom, was being crushed beneath the iron march of Roman polity. Aristarchus devoted a long life sedulously to critical studies, and is said to have written eight hundred volumes of commentaries alone. Like

<sup>1</sup> Welcker, *Epic Cycle*, vol. i. p. 8; | the last clause of this sentence do not  
Düntzer, *Zenod.* p. 31. The minute | concern us here.  
discussions as to the interpretation of |

our own Bentley, being made of very tough materials, he survived his eightieth year, and died at Cyprus of dropsy, or, as some say, voluntary starvation. He left two sons, one of whom bore his own name, but they inherited no part of their father's intellectual vigour, being rather weak-minded, and almost silly ; Nature, as it would appear, having exhausted her energy in the cerebral labours of the sire, and having no sap to spare for the healthy production of a second generation.<sup>1</sup>

The important question now remains, What were the principles which guided these great scholars in their recension of the Homeric text, and what security have we, who live at the distance of more than two thousand years from these critical operations, that we stand on the firm rock of a scientifically sifted tradition, and not on the shifting sands of ingenious but arbitrary emendation ? In attempting to give a satisfactory reply to this question, besides the special matter which the scholia present, we must bear in mind the following general considerations. In the first place, the Venetian scholia do not contain any direct report by Zenodotus and Aristarchus themselves of the principles on which their recension proceeded ; such a report as we have at full length from a Wetstein, a Griesbach, a Lachmann, an Arnold, or other modern editor who does his work thoroughly. We have only such notes of their commentaries as it suited the genius of the Byzantine grammarians to give. With regard to the individual points of Alexandrian criticism which they do transmit, there is no room for doubt as to the accuracy of their tradition ; but that they state the whole case fairly and fully, either for Zenodotus or Aristarchus, we can in nowise assert. The contrary rather seems certain. But,

<sup>1</sup> Suidas, *Aristarchus* ; Athen. ii. 71 n ; and Clinton, vol. iii. pp. 93, 530.

in the next place, we must feel fully convinced that we have, in the Alexandrian grammarians and critics, a very different class of men from those literary coadjutors of Pisistratus, to whom we have so often had occasion to allude. With the Ptolemies we are certainly arrived at an age when criticism had become a science, and was systematically practised by men who spent their lives in those studies which necessarily train the sense to a discernment of what is genuine and what is spurious in written documents. Again, we must consider that we have not to do here, as has so often happened in the history of modern scholarship, with the mere voluntary industry of individual scholars, making the most they could of the imperfect materials at their disposal. The libraries at Alexandria, like the Glyptothek at Munich, were public institutions, cherished with all the predilection that belonged to the Greek pride in books and the personal taste of the Egyptian monarchs; and we may depend upon it, that in an Alexandrian recension of the great epic poet, we possess a work elaborated from as rich stores as those which the kings of Prussia at the present day put into the hands of their illustrious scholars, when they wish them to produce a work worthy of the ambitious young kingdom which they represent.<sup>1</sup> Further, with regard to the general critical tendencies of the Alexandrian critics in dealing with the Homeric text, we can have no doubt that the reverence paid to the Homeric poems, as to a sort of Greek poetical Bible and encyclopaedia, would act as a sufficient check in preventing them from practising any of those wholesale excisions which the modern "heroic school" of criticism in Germany

<sup>1</sup> On the Alexandrian Library see | passage from Galen in Dünzter, *Zeno-Parthey*, p. 76; and for the zeal of | *dot. Stud.* 1848, p. 40.  
Ptolemy in collecting books, see the

parades so largely. We may feel assured that the main tendency of their criticism would be conservative ; that they would use the rich collection of manuscripts which the liberality of their patrons put into their hands, with the view of conscientiously preserving whatsoever of traditional Homeric matter was authenticated by the majority of good manuscripts ; while the peculiarities of single editions, especially if bearing the taint of local partialities on their face, would be rejected.<sup>1</sup> Nothing, indeed, seems more certain than that in our present Homeric text, coming to us as it does from the critical workshop of the great Alexandrian philologers, we possess all that was worth retaining in the general mass of Homeric currency amongst the Greeks. On the other hand, the same extraordinary reverence for their author, which forbade arbitrary excision, might naturally act occasionally in admitting unauthorized but widely adopted interpolations. The presumption in favour of some such in our present text is therefore not to be doubted. We are acting only reasonably when we condemn a passage that, though stamped with the authority of the most learned of the Alexandrians, seems, in the connexion where it occurs, either cumbrous or incongruous. Confident that we possess a complete and a sound text, on the whole, we can afford to look with indifference on the excision of a few lines, which hang so loosely that they can be cut off without injury. We shall not, I hope, desire to act so fondly with regard to old texts, as landed proprietors sometimes do with regard to old trees—refuse to cut them down, even when their absence would much improve the view.

But though men in the position of Zenodotus and Aris-

<sup>1</sup> The position of the Alexandrians is well stated by Lehrs, *Aristarchus*, p. 365.

tarchus, dealing with such an author as Homer, were, like our own theologians, much more likely to preserve what was spurious than to eject what was genuine, we must, on the other hand, not do them the injustice to suppose that they were ignorant of the character of the wandering minstrels and rhapsodists through whose hands the text of Homer had so long circulated. They knew that the temptations to interpolation, which the exercise of their profession threw in the way of these men, were too great to be always withstood, and in this way it might happen that even a majority of manuscripts, or possibly all the existing texts, might in some cases exhibit a reading which the eye of the practised critic would on various grounds feel warranted to reject. In these circumstances, they showed no disinclination to throw out certain universally received readings solely on internal grounds ; and would sometimes go so far as to substitute, by conjecture, a reading of their own. This was no doubt a very perilous proceeding ; and, if unchecked, might have issued in some such ingenious deformations of the ancient poetic texts as the Burgesses and Wakefields, and even the mighty Bentleys and Hermanns of modern times, have not been slow to bring to market. But against this evil there was not wanting, in ancient times, at Alexandria, the antidote which, in our own days, has proved so powerful at Cambridge and Leipzig. The keen watch of rival critics, and the sound conservative instinct of the great mass of intelligent readers, had always the pruning-knife ready to lop the rampant superfluity of an emendatory dictator. The new reading of the master in word-minting amused a few idle and curious scholars for a day ; but the public consulted the interest of the author no less than their own convenience, when they preferred a good reading, guaranteed by the con-

senting tradition of centuries, to one seemingly better, the invention of yesterday.

Let us now cast a glance into the detail of the Alexandrian criticism, as it appears in the scholia. And first, let us take Zenodotus. This critic, in reference to our judgment of his merits, stands at a double disadvantage, on the one hand as having been the first to break ground in a yet untried country, and again, in having had his errors, rather than his excellences, brought forward by the men that came after him. It is not in the nature of things that a second great critic, when reviewing the work of his predecessor, should not dwell on his vices, and to the vulgar mind unwittingly throw his virtues into the shade. The Byzantine grammarians record the readings of Zenodotus principally to show how Aristarchus overruled them. On this account we should judge him with great lenity. For doubtless some of his notions appear to our taste sufficiently jejune, and his occasional audacity in excision and emendation appears equalled only by what modern times witnessed of Bentley, not in his best, but in his worst essays.<sup>1</sup> At other times

<sup>1</sup> Dünzter's judgment of Zenodotus (p. 49,) may be set down here:—

"Quodsi omnia recte perpendimus, videmus Zenodotum de nova Homeri recensione adornanda optime meritum esse, quum e librorum auctoritate plurima emendaverit, in formis grammaticis eum nihil sere sibi permisisse multaque Aristarcho corrigenda reliquisse, plura sine idonea causa in usu syntactico mutasse, summa vero audacissimaque emendandi licentia in iis versibus temere versatum esse, in quibus ob ipsam sententiam hæsit, in versibus denique ejiciendis aut obelus notandis eum vix uno altero loco codicium auctoritate, sed suo tantum

judicio, aepissime vero atque ipsi Aristarcho probato, esse usum. Denique, quod non negligendum videtur, Zenodotus sepe genuinam scripturam retinuit postea ab Aristarcho aliquaque mutatam. Suus igitur stet Zenodoto honor, sed non ita, ut Aristarchum veriora plurimis locis, quibus a Zenodoto recessit, docuisse negemus, quamquam nonnunquam criticum Ephesium rectius judicasse contendimus. Quod inchoaverat Zenodotus, Aristarchus felicissime perfecit, quantum illa arta et humana natura imbecillitasque perficere poterant. Nos hodie de multis rebus rectius judicamus, neque disimulandum est, si nobis ad eodem, e

a strong religious feeling towards Homer, as the Greek theological authority, led to an excision equally wrong in principle, though springing out of the most amiable of motives. Homer did not say so and so concerning the gods, because such an inspired theologer could not have said it. This is the canon of criticism, by help of which the learned Ephesian leaps over the offence presented by the strange narrative about the binding of Jove, which we had previously occasion to note.<sup>1</sup> He roundly sets his *ἀθέτησις*, or mark of rejection, on all the verses (396-406) containing this scandal, which we, from our point of view, explain much more naturally, by saying that Homer simply adopted that fragment of an old Pelasgic theology, without troubling himself curiously about its orthodoxy. The piety of Zenodotus is also characteristically conspicuous in his treatment of Agamemnon's speech in Book II. 111, where he cuts off the exordium beginning with

*Ζεύς με μέγα Κρονίδης ἄτη ἐνέδησε βαρείγ,*

down to ver. 118, evidently because no pious man ought to use such language against the supreme Father! It is needless to expose seriously the unscientific character of this procedure. Only imagine a modern professor of Biblical Criticism excising whole verses from the Psalms of David because they contain imprecations against his enemies, uttered in a tone which would not become a modern Christian! The theology of Zenodotus was considerably advanced

quibus Zenodotus et Aristarchus hau-  
serunt, accedere fontes licet, de  
genuina Homeri forma subtilius ac-  
curatiusque restituenda non desper-  
andum fore." And in his chapter  
(viii.) *De Versibus Immutatis*, he  
concludes, "Omnibus his viginti quin-

que, quos vidimus, versibus summam  
Zenodoti licentiam et temeritatem  
accusavimus; uno loco (i, 664) vestigia  
servavit genuinae scripture ab Aris-  
tarcho obliterata."

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, p. 20.

beyond that of Homer and Hesiod; but the illegitimacy of such criticism is best proved by the fact, that in order to remove the theological offences of the old Ionic minstrel, that stank so strongly in the nostrils of Plato and other philosophers, we should have not only to erase some half-dozen of undignified colloquies, but to eject whole books, and disregard the construction that binds whole books together. But the aesthetical grounds are even more frequent than the theological, on which Zenodotus either appends his spurious mark to a genuine Homeric verse, or altogether deletes it,—*οὐδὲ γράφει*, as the phrase frequently occurs. One of his most common notes to a passage, though by no means peculiar to him, is *οὐκ ὁρθῶς κείται*—the verse is not in the right place, and would be more suitable elsewhere, as in the two lines xi. 13, 14, which he thinks are more properly placed at ii. 45, where they also occur. This may sometimes be a good argument; but in Homer, who has his favourite common-places, such repetitions are never suspicious in themselves, and in the present connexion, after the successful midnight raid of Ulysses and Diomede, these two verses seem peculiarly appropriate. But the favourite word which Zenodotus uses to condemn a line or a phrase is *ἀπεπτεῖς, indecorous* or *unbecoming*. The Alexandrian critic seems to have been affected by some passages, pretty much as Pope was when he translated the plain-speaking old minstrel into the refined court poet, with such accomplishment of studied phrase. But Zenodotus was even more sensitive than Pope. The passage (l. 225-234) containing the opprobrious outburst of the wrath of Achilles, was marked as spurious, scarcely for a better reason than because Achilles, as the model of a Greek gentleman, could not be conceived to have used such language before a Jove-bred, sceptre-bearing king. Some-

times his objection proceeds from an over-minute and painful binding down of the poet to the mere fact of the moment, as in II. 488-492 ;<sup>1</sup> but a poet's thought wanders with a wider range than a critic's, and is not to be tied down jealously to the literal present moment described. To the epithet *ἀριστος* in II. 580, applied to Agamemnon, he objects that this is not true, as the best of the Greeks was Ajax, not Agamemnon. This objection shows a misplaced desire, very common, I fear, with critics, both ancient and modern, to make a poet curiously consistent with himself in trifles which never enter into a sensible bard's head. Finally, in his *ἀθέτησις* of II. 220-224, and similar passages, it is extremely difficult to realize the grounds of his objection, except on the supposition that he wished to make the style of Homer as bare as that of Aristotle, and so cut out everything that logical connexion did not strictly require; and when he draws his stylus through verses 231-234 of the same book, we feel inclined to ask whether the grave critic is not at bottom a dry pedant, thinking of frigid proprieties, when the poet is indulging in as much of the quiet humorous tone as the dignity of the epic may allow. But it is an old misfortune of fervid bards to be commented on by critical gentlemen of a cold temperament; and thus an extremely rational-looking piece of emendation has only proved that the sharp-eyed judge of books, with all his perspicacity, did not understand the difference between poetry and prose.

Let us now give a taste of Aristarchus. This distinguished philologer acquired by his talents and judgment such an authority among the ancients, that one of the Byzantine grammarians is not ashamed to declare that "one should

<sup>1</sup> Dünzter, p. 162. The objection, | πόλεμος at that time. How like a of course, was, that there was no | lawyer!

follow Aristarchus rather than an inferior critic, even when the latter seems to be in the right.”<sup>1</sup> And in modern times, since the great impulse given to the study of Alexandrian philology by the happy excavations of Villoison and the genial audacity of Wolf, he has been fortunate enough to have had his merits specially set forth by one of the most masculine of living German scholars, in a masterly treatise, which must henceforth hold a distinguished place in every well-appointed Homeric library.<sup>2</sup> As exhibited in this work, the Samothracian is clearly seen standing out in the same relation to critical science that Aristotle does to natural history, and Kepler to scientific astronomy. The first virtue of an interpreter of ancient records is the faculty of going out of himself and his own immediate environment, and identifying himself with the author and age whom he may be handling. This identification consists mainly in two things: in an intimate familiarity with the peculiar style and idiom used by the author, and in an exact knowledge of the circle of facts and ideas within which he moved. That Aristarchus was admirable in both these respects has been amply proved by Lehrs. Many peculiarities of the Homeric usage of Greek words, now the common property of every school dictionary, — as in the familiar instances of *βάλλω*, *ώδε*, *γεγωνῶ*, — are mentioned by the scholiasts as having been first pointed out by him;<sup>3</sup> and along with this acknowledgment they generally give the remark, *ταῦτα ἥγνοίσε Ζηνόδοτος*, *Zenodotus was ignorant of this*. It was he who affixed the mark of spuriousness to the three last verses in the speech of Hector

<sup>1</sup> Μᾶλλον πειστέον Ἀριστάρχῳ τῷ  
Ἐρματτιᾳ εἰ καὶ δοκεῖ διληθεύειν (Schol. Ven. II. iv. 235). And again: τῷ  
Ἀριστάρχῳ πειθόμεθα, ως τάντα ἀριστῷ  
γραμματικῷ (Schol. Ven. II. ii. 316).

<sup>2</sup> *De Aristarchi Studiis Homericis.* Scripta K. Lehrs. Regiomont. 1823.

<sup>3</sup> A long list of these words is given by Lehrs, p. 84.

(VIL 160), because they contained the word *δαιμων*, which with Homer always signifies simply a god, and is never used in the sense of *fate* or *death*, as by the poets of a later age.<sup>1</sup> His opinions on Homeric religion, geography, mythology, etc., show a similar nice discrimination in distinguishing between the Homeric world of ideas, and that of the *νεώτεροι* or moderns of his day. Of this there is a remarkable instance in his simple common-sense view of the *Βουλὴ Διὸς*, or "counsel of Jove," in the fifth verse of the first book.<sup>2</sup> His sobriety and sound judgment appear particularly in the views which, in common with Eratosthenes, he held as to the geography of the *Odyssey*, a field of imaginative expatiation which has always been particularly dear to that large class of learned speculators who deem that they can see through mists, bind the shifting clouds, and tread the pathless air in security.<sup>3</sup> Guided by the same healthy instinct, he opposed

<sup>1</sup> These verses have accordingly been expunged by Bekker, who is fond of giving effect to the decisions of the Alexandrians as against our present vulgate.

<sup>2</sup> See the Scholium, and Lehrs, p. 191.

<sup>3</sup> "Porro haec fuit communis florentis Graeciae opinio, poetas docere; jam tum, ut mihi videtur ultra id quod verum est egressa. Attamen hi de bonis moribus et exemplis virtutis cogitabant. Quae res a parte doctorum Alexandrinorum dupliciter deflexa est, cum primum illam poetarum doctrinam a moribus ad variam eruditionem transferrerent; deinde dicebant optimum quemque poetam id agere atque hoc boni poetae consilium esse ut quam plurima doceret. Sed fuerunt alii elegantioris judicii, qui defendebant poetæ officium non esse (ut vocabula ab illis

sumam)—διδασκαλίας sed ψυχαγωγίας. Horum princeps Eratosthenes (Strab. i. p. 6, p. 25). Ab altera parte alios secutus stat Strabo Eratostenem impugnans. Ab hac opinione profectus pleraque ad eruditioris etatis scientiam interpretando accommodat. Sic ἀρκτούς explicat ἀρκτικὸν κύκλον, ne hunc ignorasse videatur poeta, ἀψόφοιος Ωκεανὸν de mari affluxu et recessu (p. 3, 4). Item geographicā. Nosse Bosporum Cimmerium, Istrum, oras Hispanie (p. 6). Huius opinioni primus omni vi obstiterat Eratosthenes, qui poetam non doctrinam sed voluntatem audientium quæsiuissime defendit ejusque eruditioem mediocrem esse. Homerum tantummodo in Graecia bene versatum esse, reliquarum vero regionum summam esse inscientiam, ne Ἀgyptum quidem vel Libyam cogitam habere. Hoc vero tantum abesse

the allegorical interpretation of the poet, of which the wide license was noted in the previous discourse. He had the first great virtue of a judicial mind, *εὐλάβεια*, caution, and wisely refrained from changing the text merely because he could propose a reading which might appear more appropriate.<sup>1</sup> It is proved, particularly by Lehrs, that even in the minutest points of the doctrine of accentuation, to which, like Porson, he paid great attention, he was free from the very common error of grammarians, the overriding of tradition and custom by some favourite dogmatic principle. He had that sacred respect for usage in such matters which rendered him a safe guide in a region where he who will not sometimes follow an unreasonable fashion is sure to go wrong. He preferred following a convenient analogy (*συνεκδρομή*), though somewhat loose, as popular analogies often are, to pushing a correct principle to the extreme verge of consistency.<sup>2</sup>

Whosoever considers these points thoroughly, will not fail to perceive that the Roman and Byzantine grammarians had very substantial reasons for the respect with which they always quoted the critical dicta of Aristarchus; and if a recent English scholar allowed himself to call the Alexandrian grammarians "a set of men who were born to obscure

ut poete vitio vertendum sit, ut ipse poeta nihil nisi auditorum delectationem quærens etiam de industria insulas et terras remotas et miras remotorum populorum consuetudines finxit. Quare si quis Circen, Cyclopes et alios dicere velit ubi fuerint, eum vanam operam consumere. Immo etiam si statuendum sit Ulixen circa Siciliam errasse, tamen Homerum rationibus quæ poetam decent ductum hæc in longius removere debuisse et

removisse, ne memorabilia nimis in propinquo acciderent. Hac via progressus est Aristarchus, hac via sectator ejus Apollodorus." — *Lehrs*, pp. 252, 253.

<sup>1</sup> In ix. 222, for *ἔξ ἔρωτο*, he proposed to read *ἀψ ἔρωτο*, but, as the scholiast adds, *ὑπὸ τερττῆς εὐλαβεῖας οὐδὲ μετέθηκεν, from his remarkable cautiousness he allowed the vulgate to stand.*

<sup>2</sup> *Lehrs*, p. 267.

the ancient Greek language rather than to illustrate it,"<sup>1</sup> we must remember that Elmsley, like many English scholars, preferred accuracy in a narrow sphere to comprehensiveness in a large one, and willingly remained without many ideas which he might have learned from those Germans, whom Porson, mighty in metrical minutiae, was too forward to despise. On the whole, we have the best reason to congratulate ourselves on the character of the hands into which Homer fell, when he was tried and purified, and stamped and packed up for his long journey of two thousand years, from the foundation of the Alexandrian Museum to the revival of that scholarship, at once exact and comprehensive, of which Wolf and Lobeck, Boeckh and Bekker, are the representatives; and in doubtful cases, where we have no means of judging for ourselves, we need not be ashamed of deferring to the mere authority of the prince of ancient critics. At the same time, we shall be in no danger of forgetting that Aristarchus also was a man, and, in addition to the common weaknesses of our frail mortality, was exposed to some special causes of misapprehension in interpreting Homer, arising out of his position as a Greek. The principal source of these errors of judgment is to be recognised in that transcendental respect for Homer's genius as the great national teacher, which made his works to the Greeks, not their garden of delight only, but their temple of worship. Hence the principle of *ἀπεπτές*, already noticed as leading Zenodotus so far astray. From a principle arising out of feelings so deeply-rooted in every well-constituted Greek mind, we are not to expect that even Aristarchus should have been altogether free; and in particular, it has been noted by Lehrs, that the peculiar simpli-

<sup>1</sup> Watson's *Life of Porson*, p. 231.

city of Homer's style and diction was as little understood by the Samothracian and the ancients generally, as by many an erudite modern critic, and distinguished English translator.<sup>1</sup> So difficult a matter is it for the full-grown man to understand the less complete but more healthy nature of the boy who was his father.

The principles, whether of external authority or of internal evidence, by which the genuineness of any individual text in our vulgate Homer is to be determined, will be best evolved in their application to each disputed line in its place. There is a tact in these matters, similar to the wise balance, characteristic of a judicial mind, which will not be anticipated by any systematic dictation of general canons, and which can be acquired only by dealing cautiously and circumspectly with individual cases as they occur. Only three preliminary warnings by way of postulate may be laid down, the neglect of which, even in critics of the highest mark, has produced that uncomfortable feeling of looseness and instability which is apt to be generated in a man of sober mind, when he has to deal with some of the most recent exhibitions of philological skill in the book world. In the first place, we are to fling gallantly aside the old superstition that there is any peculiar virtue in the vulgate, merely because it is a vulgate. It is better, no doubt, as such, than any mere conjecture, however ingenious, flung out without necessity by a random critic; but against a text cautiously formed from

<sup>1</sup> "Cæterum qui vel obiter historiam interpretationis Homericæ tetigit, cognitum habet nullam fere aetatem fuisse quin magna pars hominum, doctorum certo, Homericorum niorum simplicitate offenderetur; per Wolfium demum et Vossium paullatim hic sensus acui cœptus et cum pluribus communicatus. Illos vero Alexandrinos et aulæ luxuria affluentes et philosophorum severitate circumstrepentes in multis offendisse mihi consentaneum videtur."—Lehrs, *Arist. Stud. Hom.* p. 355.

well-sifted manuscripts and well-weighed authorities it is absolutely worthless. Errors and interpolations in every ancient current text—nay, even in copies of yesterday, as every printer's boy knows—are to be presumed ; and in the case of an author so fenced round with authority as Homer, the process of excision, which public veneration will not allow to be wanton, is more likely to mend the text than to maim it. But, on the other hand, the eager itch of correction is to be avoided as much, or even more watchfully, than the timid shrinking from an acknowledged flaw. The true critic, like the great general, is neither timid nor rash, but cautiously retiring when policy commands retreat, and advancing boldly when the moment is favourable to a blow. So far as my observation has gone, this just balance of caution and adventure is as rare in the field of books as in the field of blood ; and especially amongst German scholars I find a whole host of critical surgeons who seem to think that legs are made principally for the purpose of being cut off, erudite men of mail who set out in their exsecting campaigns so keen-set for the fray, that, like Don Quixote, they will fight with windmills, or the shadow of their own spear, rather than not fight at all. With this school I have nothing in common. I admire much the ingenuity of the objections, and more sometimes the felicity of their restorations ; but I remain quietly by the old text, content to know nothing where nothing can be surely known, and not wasting brains on conjectures where no conjectures are required. Finally, there is one consideration specially applicable to the text of Homer, which the Wolfian critics seem altogether to have forgotten. Even if it were allowable to exsect violently, according to their habit, everything that can possibly be spared from the present text—which it certainly is not, the

quality of Homer's style being amplitude, not conciseness—we want in the old minstrel that warrant which in other authors is generally esteemed necessary to justify the process of excision. There is no recognisable difference of style between the passages cut out and those which are allowed to stand. The Homeric phraseology was, like the Homeric poetry, the common property of the people to whom it belonged, and in a particular manner the property of the order of minstrels, who used it not merely as a popular inheritance, but as a professional accomplishment. Whatever these men wove into the tissue of the Homeric verse, they wove with the same thread, and they did so unconsciously, requiring no skill to forge what they knew by long practice, exactly as the Roman Popes know the style of the eucyclical comminations which, from the time of Hildebrand downwards, have been in use to be fulminated over their flocks. What successive minstrels or rhapsodists may have interpolated into Homer, before the edition of Pisistratus, they did, for the most part, in so perfectly Homeric a vein, both as to style and matter, that it became impossible for the most cunning eye to separate the addition from the original. Neither were such interpolations forgeries, in the popular sense of that word; not, for instance, like the Shakspearian forgeries of the young London scrivener Ireland at the end of the last century; if they were not Homer's, they were at least Homeric; they were plants growing in the same soil, sprung from the same seed, fed by the same dews, and blooming in the same sunshine. It must happen, therefore, that when a modern critic remodels the text of Homer, I do not say in the sweeping style of Köchly, but even in the moderate way of Bekker, he must generally proceed, not on grounds of proof, but on mere suspicion; and of criticism founded on

such principles, a sober man can only say, that if similar canons were applied by the judges in our criminal courts to decide the fate of the unfortunate persons brought before them, many an innocent man would be condemned.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Köchly's grand style of exec-  
tion will be best learned from *Iliadis  
Carmina xvi. scholarum in usum*  
(Lipsiae, 1861). Bekker's more mod-  
erate process (Bonn, 1850) exhibits  
only ten lines cast out from the first  
book, and thirty or more from the  
second; but amongst these the very  
first is ver. 47 of the first book, exected  
from the famous description of the de-  
scent of Apollo—a castration not cer-  
tainly of a kind to inspire the reader  
with much faith in the surgical opera-  
tions that are to follow.

## DISSERTATION X.

### ON POETICAL TRANSLATION, AND THE ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF HOMER.

TRANSLATORS and lexicographers are a class of literary workers that are apt to receive small praise and little glory in the book world; but for this want they are amply compensated, both by the rich harvest of improvement which their labour brings to themselves, and by its manifest utility to the great mass of mankind. They are a sort of road-makers and bridge-builders in the great empire of human thought; men use them only as means for attaining an end, and, when the journey is over, readily forget by what kindly intervening hands they were led to the blazing fire, the comfortable bed, and the well-furnished board. But there are not wanting instances in which the middleman has attained more celebrity, and achieved a wider field of efficiency, than the principal whom he represents, as many a mere money-changer has become wealthier than the merchant whose convenience he serves. The Old Testament Scriptures never exercised any influence beyond the narrow limits of Judea, till, under the second Ptolemy, they were translated into the current literary language of the ancient world; Luther's German Bible has stirred the wells of thought in hundreds

of thousands of hearts to whom the original Scriptures, and even the Latin translation of the Church, must have remained for ever inaccessible ; the Gaelic Bible, at the present day, is the only standard of classicality in the venerable language to which it belongs ; and Pope's Homer, with whatever brilliant defects studded, was at one time almost as generally read among the educated classes as the Bible ; and if it is less read now, this is owing to a change in the spirit of the age, and in the objects that excite public attention, not to any change in the verdict which criticism will ever pronounce on that work, as at once a piece of most elegant, vigorous, and effective English, and a most felicitous transference of the old Ionic version of the tale of Troy into the most polished style of English poetry in the eighteenth century. Translations, we may be assured, do even more than railways in bringing to some mutual understanding the tribes of men, sundered as they are by barriers of language, religion, and polity, much more difficult to pass than the highest Alps ; and although a very warm enthusiasm for any foreign world of thought is seldom found to exist, except in those to whom the native dress of those foreign thoughts has become familiar, still translations are the great engines that first break down the walls of partition betwixt people and people, and enable thousands of intellectual brethren to shake hands who never could have seen faces by any other device.

Of all tasks, except that of driving learning into heads not willing to receive it, the work of translation has generally been considered the most irksome ; and there is no denying that it is beset with very great difficulties. No doubt, the translator starts free from much labour which often sorely tries the original composer ; he has neither materials to gather nor story to invent, nor parts to concatenate. An

original work unquestionably demands more genius ; a copy in most cases, we may think, requires no genius at all, only dexterity and tact ; still it is more difficult to translate well than to compose, as most persons who have tried them both will be forward to testify. The free plastic power which is put forth in all sorts of composition, enjoys a triumph only when the form is so closely wedded to the substance, as in the case of original composition. Under the full operation of the inventive faculty, the imaginative birth will often leap into being, like Minerva, in flashing panoply at once. There is no looking about here for dress, or studying of attitude ; the word has been born with the thought ; it has not been adapted. An inventive genius must always exercise a sort of severe compulsion upon himself when he submits to the task of a long continuous translation ; and this is the reason, no doubt, why, to the great loss of transmitted literature, so few of our great poets have enriched our language with translations of such high character and enduring classicality, as Pope's 'Iliad,' Coleridge's 'Wallenstein,' and Carey's 'Dante.' Of course, when I speak of the difficulty of translation, I mean translation which is really such, that is, a transference of the thought and expression of a work of art in one language into another language, with as much conscientious accuracy as may be possible, consistently with the laws of good composition and the peculiarities of the language into which the transference is made. If, instead of a translation, properly so called, that which the Italians call a *rifacimento* be intended, of which sort of composition we have a familiar example in Goethe's version of 'Reynard the Fox,' in this case the conditions of the problem are reversed. Here the author has neither the original composer's difficulty of inventing and constructing,

nor the translator's difficulty of adapting and conforming. He is in the most favourable position possible for mere graceful execution and pleasant rhythmical exercise. He may be as original as he pleases, and no man can tax his ill-timed cleverness ; and when he is dull, he is only sticking to his text. He is like a youth who suddenly falls heir to a great fortune, which he has no trouble in making, but great pleasure in spending freely, according to his desire.

To a good poetical translation there seem to be essential three things : accuracy as to the sense ; identity of tone and style ; and identity, or, where that may be unattainable, analogical character or similarity of the measure. Let us look at these three points separately.

It is necessary, of course, in the first place, that a poetical translation, like every other transference of a foreign form of thought, should be accurate, that is, should truly represent the meaning of the original. As a poetical translator, you are bound to give that meaning gracefully and harmoniously, according to certain laws ; but you have no license to pervert the meaning, or to make your author say something that he did not say, something, perhaps, that in his circumstances, and in the social atmosphere which he breathed, he could not possibly have said. The problem of the English translator is simply, as Dryden remarks,<sup>1</sup> to do into English, not to Anglicise. When we make an ancient Greek talk modern English, we must take special care that we do not make him talk like a modern Englishman. Not only what he says must be Greek in substance, but how he says it. “ I have endeavoured,” says Dryden, in the Preface to his great work, “ to make Virgil speak such English as he would himself have spoken if he had been born in England,

<sup>1</sup> Preface to Juvenal.

and in this present age."<sup>1</sup> His problem would have been more correctly stated if he had said, "such English as Virgil would have spoken, provided English and not Latin had been the language of ancient Rome at the time when the great Mantuan composed his work." For though we translate an ancient Greek poet into our own speech, we are not to transport him into our own time. To do this would be to make the work of translation useless, so far as the manner is concerned; we should have the poem, but it would be told as an Englishman would tell it, with his peculiarly English cast of thought and turn of expression. We must, therefore, through the medium of perfectly idiomatic English, aim at giving a truly Greek picture, Greek not only in fact, in sentiment, in thought, but even in turns of expression, where such are characteristic of the Greek people, and not grossly inconsistent with the genius of the English language. For herein lies the real problem of all translation, to bring out what is characteristic both in thought and expression. The characteristic is the mean truth between verbal literalness on the one hand, and careless adaptation on the other. Adaptation to modern ideas and style, except, of course, in the case of a *rifacimento*, is adulteration and disguise; it is a corruption of the very soul and vital principle of a translation, and can in nowise be allowed. But if the free adapter gives us adulterated Greek, the literal translator gives crippled English; and limping Graces are no Graces at all. The literal translator, whether in prose or verse, but specially in verse, is a mere mechanic; he transposes, but he does not transfuse; on many occasions he

<sup>1</sup> The same doctrine is laid down in his Preface to translations from *Theocritus*, *Lucretius*, and *Horace*, full

is scarcely even a creditable mechanic ; for a good workman will understand the materials with which he deals, and the tools which he handles, which your literal translator never does. He is generally a creature who, though cunningly learned in Greek, German, or Hebrew vocables, is as far removed from any notion of an English sentence, or even of the true force of English words, as a worm is from a bird's flight, or a Dutch boor from a French dancing-master. A sentence, even in plain prose, has as much its appropriate musical rhythm and cadence as a verse. This your literal translator never comprehends. His words are chessmen that will play an intelligible game, though not even that without gross blunders, but can never make out a musical tune. "The slavish, verbal style of translation," says Dryden, "is much like dancing on ropes with fettered legs ; a man may shun a fall by using caution, but gracefulness of motion is not to be expected."<sup>1</sup> It requires a genius for the music of language to translate Plato or Cicero well, as much as to translate Sophocles or Homer ; and this music he will never be able to bring out who starts from the idea that his part as a translator is performed by simply transposing the vocables, instead of reproducing the character, and transfusing the spirit of his original.<sup>2</sup> The principle, therefore,

<sup>1</sup> Works by Scott, vol. xii. p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Pope's notions as to the golden mean between literalness and careless freedom were extremely just, however much, in his practice, he may sometimes seem to have forgot his precepts. "It is certain," says he, "no literal translation can be just to an excellent original in a superior language ; but it is a great mistake to imagine (as many have done) that a rash paraphrase can make amends for this general defect ; which is no less in danger to lose the

*spirit of an ancient, by deviating into modern manners of expression.* If there be sometimes a darkness, there is often a light in antiquity, which nothing better preserves than a version almost literal. *I know no liberties one ought to take, but those which are necessary for transfusing the spirit of the original, and supporting the poetical style of the translation.*"—Preface to *Iliad*.

Goethe, in his eulogium on Wieland, 1813, has the following remarks

which ought to regulate a good translation, so as to hit the just mean between license and literalness, may be expressed thus: All liberties which either deface the characteristic truth of the original, or imprint a foreign, that is, in translating from the classics, a modern character on the work, are wrong; all minute adherence to the letter of the original, which either enfeebles the vocal power, impedes the graceful movement, or cools the fervid inspiration of the original, are equally wrong. And here we see plainly the extreme delicacy of the work which a translator has to perform—a work where neither extreme fineness of touch, nor bold dash of fancy, will always suffice to produce a satisfactory result. So that the utmost a man can aim at on occasions is to present the reader with a skilful compromise between two incompatible demands. “Every one should know,” said the great Florentine, “that nothing harmonized by musical enchainment can be transferred from one language into another without breaking all its sweetness and harmony.”<sup>1</sup> Taken literally, this sentence would forbid poetical translations altogether; and

to the same effect:—“There are two principles of translation. The one is that the foreign author should be considered one of ourselves, and read accordingly; the other, that we should go over to his point of view, and consider his work in its peculiarities of speech, circumstance, etc. The advantages of either mode are well enough known, through numerous examples, to all cultivated people. Our friend, who saw the middle way between both, sought to unite the two, but, as a man of feeling and taste, in doubtful cases he preferred the first method. No one, probably, knew better than he the perplexities of a translator. Who more deeply convinced than he that the let-

ter killeth, and the spirit giveth life? The reader perceives how careful he is in his Introduction to place him in the period of his author, and to make him feel at home with his characters; how, having made his author our friend, he makes him speak in a friendly manner to our ear and heart; and how, finally, any difficulty that may raise doubts, or prove stumbling-blocks, he discusses in notes. In this way, one sees how he first makes himself thoroughly master of his position, and then gives himself honest trouble to place us so as to benefit by his insight, and share in his enjoyment.”—Werke, 1830, vol. xxxii. p. 251.

<sup>1</sup> Carey’s *Inferno*, iv. note 3.

for those whose ears have been long tuned to the original, they will seldom appear quite satisfactory, even when they fulfil the highest demands ; but the important truth which lies at the bottom of Dante's remark is, that there will always be not a few passages in the finely-harmonized dictation of a great master which cannot be reproduced in another tongue, whether from defect of genius in the translator, or from defect of power in the instrument which he uses. To this last unconquerable difficulty Mr. Kingsley alludes, when he says, " It is simply impossible to render Homer into English verse ; because, for one reason among many, it is impossible to preserve the pomp of sound which invests with grandeur his most common words. How can any skill represent the rhythm of Homer in a language which, to take the first verse that comes to hand, transforms *boos megalio boeien* into "a great ox's hide."<sup>1</sup> This is quite true with regard to a literal translation of that, and not a few such phrases. But our admiration for the superb rhythmical roll of ancient verse, must not so possess our minds as to blind us to the grand compensating powers which our rich and various English speech possesses.<sup>2</sup> Few languages, indeed, are so poor as not to possess some excellence, which, as occasion calls it forth, may lift them above the most favoured dialects. Now, these compensating qualities it is the business of the translator, and his praise, to employ.

<sup>1</sup> *Hypatia*, vol. i. ch. 8.

<sup>2</sup> It is a common one-sidedness of mere classical scholars to set the excellencies of the Greek and Latin language against the defects of the mother tongue, as if this had no peculiar virtues of its own, of which the most polished of the classical languages

knew nothing. But the principle of compensation is far too widely spread in the universe to allow of such narrow notions being true. He who wishes to see a concise but scientific statement of the high excellence of the English language, should read Grimm, *Ueber den Ursprung der Sprache* (Berlin, 1852, p. 50).

Most unjust, therefore, and most unreasonable, is the critic who, while he notes carefully every passage in which the translator's work is inferior to the original, and inferior perhaps by the necessity of the language he uses, at the same time ties him down to a literalness which prevents him from bringing finely out the compensating virtues of his own tongue. I for one, with all respect for Greek and Latin, and all languages filling the ear with a rich flow of terminational consonances, should consider that I failed as much in philosophy as in patriotism, if I were to take Mr. Kingsley's proposition, and say that in all cases, or in the majority of cases, an English version of any fine passage in a Greek author must necessarily be inferior, even in pomp of sound, to the original. Many passages may be inferior in terminational luxury of vowels; that is all. But our monosyllables, while curtailed of their cadence, have preserved all the vocal force and all the dramatic expressiveness that originally belonged to them; and in this respect, at least, for vigorous and pictorial writing, certainly give us an advantage with which no Greek can cope. For nothing in the science of language is more certain than that the emphasis laid on the musical affixes to roots in terminational languages, often obliterates, or at least in all cases renders less effective, the onomatopoetic, or, as I should prefer to call it, the pictorial expressiveness of the root. No doubt, to take a familiar example, when I write the line in the first book, expressive of the terrible twang of Apollo's bow when he shot off the fatal arrows against the Greeks—

*δεινὴ δὲ κλαγγὴ γένετ' ἀργυρέοιο βιοῖο—*

the replication of *οῖο* at the end of the line rolls with a very grand pomp of vowel sound into the luxurious sinuosity

ties of the ear ; but we ought not to forget, when descanting on the beauty of this passage, that if this *ō* has anything to do with the dramatic effect of the line in this place, it is purely accidental ; for the same termination occurs in *κρυεροῖο πολέμοιο*, and a score of similar instances. The strength of our language, therefore, lies in the power and the significance of the roots ; a power which, whoever shall wisely use, need have no cause to fear comparison with the language of Homer, even in his best passages. I know critics are for the most part slow to admit this ; but my reason and my ear both inform me certainly of the fact. I believe a translation may be, and sometimes is, superior to the original, if not as a whole, certainly in individual passages. But if a man of true genius translates from a language of less into a language of greater compass, his translation ought to be superior to the original, not only in the parts, but as a whole. This I take to be the case, for example, with Knebel's 'Lucretius ;' because, for the purposes of philosophical poetry, the German language is an instrument of much greater power than the Latin. But to recur to the Iliad. What I say is, that in the familiar line, for example, which describes the death-fall of a hero in the Iliad--

δούπησεν δὲ πεσὼν ῥάβησε δὲ τεύχε' ἐπ' αὐτῷ<sup>1</sup>—

Pope has not only equalled, but, partly by the force of his own genius, partly by the virtue of our noble English language, surpassed the original—

“ Ponderous he falls ; his clanging arms resound ;  
And his broad buckler rings against the ground.”

And the cause of the inferiority of the Greek, in point of

<sup>1</sup> Iliad iv. 504.

sound, manifestly is that the *ησε* of the verbal termination, on which the rhythmical accent falls, drowns the dramatic force which naturally lies in the roots *δούπ* and *ἀπαθ*. But even where this peculiar weakness of terminational languages does not come into play, I think it would be extremely difficult to show that Pope, as a great master of the English tongue, is generally inferior to Homer in point of sound. Nay, I maintain that he will not seldom be found superior, because, as a man of genius, and a wise workman, he knew where to find and to maintain his vantage-ground. The same thing is true of the German translations. If the flow of their hexameters is less harmonious, their compound words not rarely speak more powerfully, both to the ear and to the imagination, than the originals after which they are modelled. The "*hellumschienten Achaier*," for instance, of Voss, is as fine a word to my ear, and more vivid to my imagination, than the *ἐνκνήμιδες* of Homer. Then, in the famous line 49,

"Grauvoll aber erklang das Getön des silbernen Bogens,"  
as Voss has it, or as Donner--

"Grauvoll dröhnte der Klang vom dem silbernen Bogen des  
Gottes,"

though it is quite manifest that the luxury of the replicated *οίο* is not reached, yet I think an impartial scholar, skilled in the German language, will admit that the first part of the line, in both the modern versions, is superior in vocal power and expressiveness to the Greek. So much for the principle of compensation in the transference of poetical beauties from one language to another; which, whosoever does not allow with a certain liberal generosity to translators, virtually interdicts poetical translation altogether; for the soldier who

must always fight at a disadvantage will soon learn not to fight at all.<sup>1</sup>

The second requisite of a good translation is identity of tone and style: tone of mind, as giving the very colour and living pulse of the author; tone of style, as the natural and necessary expression of that mind, these two things being so closely interwoven, that it is possible only in abstract discussion to separate them. “The hardest task in translation,” says the same robust old English master whom we previously quoted, “is a secret of which few translators have sufficiently thought. It is maintaining that character of an author which distinguishes him from all others, and makes him appear that individual poet whom you would interpret. If the fancy of Ovid, for instance, be luxuriant, it is his character to be so, and if I retrench it, he is no longer Ovid. It will be replied, that he receives advantages by this lopping of his superficial branches; but I rejoin that a translator has no such right.” Of the truth of these remarks no critic can doubt; and yet it has been the too common practice, even of our best English translators, both to amplify without gaining a beauty, and to condense with the certain loss of character. Homer is not abrupt like Alfieri, nor stately like Milton, nor severe like Dante, nor sententious like Tacitus. Mr. Newman writes quite in the spirit, and with the truth of Dryden, when he says, that “the real Greek Homer is sometimes, according to our modern ideas, if we had courage

<sup>1</sup> Roscommon (*Essay on Translated Verse*) clearly recognises the right of a translator to improve his original:—

“ ‘Tis true, composing is the nobler part;  
But good translation is no easy art.  
For though materials have long since been found  
Yet both your fancy and your hands are bound,  
And by improving what was writ before,  
Invention labours less, but judgment more.”

to speak the plain truth, mean and ignoble ; and if the lusty old Maonian minstrel could cry out to his translators at this time of day, doubtless he would call out, as Oliver Cromwell did to his portrait-painter, "Paint me just as I am ; *warts and all !*"<sup>1</sup> Here therefore, as in the matter of accuracy of rendering, what we want is the characteristic. The translator must never shirk anything in his author that is truly characteristic, either of his peculiar genius, or of the people and the age to which he belongs. How far our Homeric translators have erred in this way was sufficiently indicated above, in the remarks on the genius and character of the heroic times.<sup>2</sup> Those who, whatever they might profess, actually fancied Homer as a literary gentleman with a pen in his hand, were under a constant temptation to sin against the tone and style of their author, and they constantly did so. But there is a deeper reason for the evil reputation which our English translations enjoy generally among foreign scholars,<sup>3</sup> viz., the intense nationality of the English mind. John Bull is an exceedingly honest, lusty, and jovial fellow, full of good sense, and a grand hearty directness, which keeps him free from the great German sins of bookishness, idea-conjuring, and verbal jugglery. But there is a high-pitched self-estimate about him, which is apt to degenerate into an incapacity for appreciating and appropriating foreign modes of thought and expression. With all his virtues, he can scarcely be said to be a very philosophical animal. He does not readily go out of himself. He is not remarkably receptive of foreign ideas. He travels over the globe largely, but his church and his tea-kettle, and his aristocratic conceits, are apt

<sup>1</sup> *Homeric Translation in Theory and Practice.* By F. W. Newman (1861), pp. 61 and 73.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, p. 148.

<sup>3</sup> *Die Engländer sind die schlechtesten Ueersetzer.* F. A. Wolf, *Vorlesungen über Griech. Litt.* By Gürler (1831), p. 21.

to travel along with him. All this makes him a bad translator; for how can a man represent faithfully modes of thought and phases of feeling, which he has never faithfully and lovingly, and with a child-like reverence, received into his soul?

I consider, therefore, if these remarks are only half true, there is a large field yet open for the useful activity of translators in our language; and I make no doubt, if we once hit upon the true idea of giving the genuine character of our original, both in thought and expression, we shall, at no distant day, surpass even the Germans, who are at present our great teachers in this, as in so many other branches of philosophical scholarship. For we have a popular audience, a public atmosphere, and a practical tact, which our great rivals as yet mostly lack, and which should save us from falling into some errors to which the academic character of German translated literature is prone. The late distinguished teacher, Dr. Arnold, may perhaps be looked on as one of the inaugurators of a new school of scholarship in this country, which is destined to combine the extensive learning and the large philosophy of the Germans, with the manly vigour and the popular effectiveness of the English. What bearing this has on the character of our future English translations the following passage will make plain:—

“If I were to translate Herodotus, it were absurd to do it in my common English, because he and I do not belong to analogous periods of Greek and English literature. I should try to translate him in the style of the old translators of Comines rather than of Froissart; in the English of that period of our national cultivation which corresponds to the period of Greek cultivation at which he wrote. I might, and probably should do this ill, still, I should try to amend the execution without altering my plan.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Arnold's *Life*, vol. ii. p. 104.

Now, without discussing the absolute propriety of the special procedure in the instance here quoted, it is quite certain that without some analogy of this kind between the style of the original and the style of the translation, the translated work must produce a very inadequate, perhaps, in some important respects, an altogether false impression. It may be impossible, perhaps, in many cases, to translate an ancient author into the English of that period of our literary history whose tone most nearly corresponds to his ; Homer, for instance, could not be translated into the English of Chaucer, because that English is now obsolete in England, which Homer's Greek in Greece never was. Even the use of archaic words in an English translation of Homer must be kept within narrow bounds, and always under the control of a fine tact, unless dangers are to be incurred far greater than any advantages which can be gained.<sup>1</sup> Homer was antique to Sophocles, as the English Bible in many places is antique to us ; but not therefore antiquated, much less obsolete. But as the Doric Greek of the pig-selling peasant in the Acharnenses of Aristophanes is dramatically rendered by our best translators either in broad Scotch, or in the kindred Craven dialect of Yorkshire, or in some of the peculiar dialects of the other agricultural counties of England, so there are whole idylls in Theocritus which would sound ridiculous in any other language than that of Tam o' Shanter ; just as Burns himself would be ridiculous if translated into the epigrammatic prettiness of Béranger's style, or the Psalms of David if tricked out—as indeed they were by an elegant Scotch scholar—into the artful grace of the Ovidian distich. To what results this principle leads, in the case of Homer, will

<sup>1</sup> See on this head Arnold, *On Translating Homer*, i. pp 6, 34. London, 1861.

be seen presently, after we shall have considered the third important element which belongs to poetical translation, viz., Rhythm or Measure.

Here we find ourselves driven into a much wider field of discussion, and treading on a much more slippery and perilous path. Nevertheless, the man who imagines that there is no principle to regulate this matter, and that the genius of a translator can make any measure answer his purpose, has only seen half a truth. It is quite true that without genius the most skilfully chosen measure will produce a meagre result; it is equally true that a measure chosen in defiance of all principle will not fail to produce certain brilliant results in the hands of a really brilliant man; but the work unquestionably would have been better, if executed by a man of equal genius on a scientifically calculated plan. It may be that one man handles one kind of verse more dexterously than another, and therefore he is wise to use that; but his particular dexterity will not make it the more difficult to show, on demonstrative grounds, that there is another kind of verse, which, for the work in hand, possesses a greater natural aptitude than the one that happens to suit his taste. Let us therefore endeavour to bring out the principles that ought to regulate this matter.

But here we are met in the outset by those who, taking the dictum of Dante above quoted in its most sweeping extent, declare that all poetry, at least all first-rate poetry, ought to be translated into prose. Their reason for this, of course, can only be, that they consider the mystery of poetical inspiration to be so high, and its laws so subtle, that the transference of any work of real genius from one language to another, in such a manner as to produce the proper effect of genius, is practically impossible. To this argument we may

reply, in the first place, that it manifestly goes a great deal beyond the province of poetry, strictly so called, for there is, as already remarked, a music in a broad rolling prose period of Plato, which, as the expression of a great original genius, cannot be adequately reproduced by any imitation. All translation, therefore, intended to produce an æsthetical effect, whether in prose or verse, is, according to this view, impossible. Now, there is a certain amount of truth here, which, admitted at starting, will make the whole matter plain. Whoever reads poetry, not for the purpose of an æsthetical delight, but merely to philosophize curiously on the exhibition of human nature which it contains, and it may be to draw weighty inferences from the exact form of some apparently insignificant expression, must either take his text from the original, or provide himself with an exact and curiously literal translation. But even a literal translation will not always serve such a curious reader's purpose; for the words may easily be preserved while the character and even the sense is lost.<sup>1</sup> However, the example of our English Bible proves plainly how much may be achieved by a prose version of great poetical works—for that the Prophecies of Isaiah and the Psalms of David are poetry will not be denied. Not a few persons also prefer Dr. Carlyle's prose version of Dante to Carey's, and, if these are entitled to their taste, are there not stronger reasons for a prose trans-

<sup>1</sup> What Latinist, for instance, could divine the meaning of *sermo meus non capit in vobis*, the literal Vulgate version of the Greek, in John viii. 37? The famous *supersubstantiale* of Jerome, for the "daily bread" of our Lord's Prayer, is another instance where the translator evidently wished to be extremely literal; but this sounding word was nonsense, and the mother

of nonsense. Such extremely literal versions, like Aquila's Greek version of the Old Testament (Jerom. in Isa. xlix.), are chiefly valuable for the secondary use of proving the text from which they were translated. See Davidson's *Biblical Criticism*, vol. ii. p. 191, on the Philoxenian, as contrasted with the old Syriac version of the New Testament.

lation of Homer? Does not the profound reverence which every cultivated reader feels for the Iliad and Odyssey, as for a sort of secular Bible, inspire us with a respect for the very letter of that rare old minstrel's utterance, which refuses to adapt itself to the exigencies of a rhythmical translation? Is there not something in the very phrase of these old poems, so primitive and so Hellenic, that, when thrown into the fusing-pot of a modern rhymer, and brought out in the artificial form of a modern couplet or stanza, it altogether disappears? Let this be granted up to a certain point, and by all means let a prose translation be made for the use of such nicely reverential and curiously observant readers; but the translation, though in prose, must be made by a man who is not only a scholar, but a poet and a thinker; otherwise no care will save him from making such blunders as Goethe alludes to when he says, in 'Faust'—

"He who strives to know a thing well  
Must first the spirit within expel;  
Then can he count the parts in his hand,  
Only without the spiritual band;  
*Encheirisis nature*, chemistry says,  
Being wise to fool herself with a phrase."

But if the common sense and feeling of mankind be consulted, rather than the demands of a few curious speculators, the argument for literal prose translations of great poetical works will be found to have little weight. The case of the English and German Bibles, both classical works in their several languages, is plainly exceptive; for neither do men go to the Bible for aesthetical delight, or with the feeling at all that they are going to read poetry; nor is the rhythm of the Psalms of David or the Prophecies of Isaiah so well marked, even to the ear of the accomplished Hebraist, as to

create a demand for any form of modern verse that might present an equivalent.<sup>1</sup> But with Horace and Homer the case is quite different. The poetry of these great masters is cast in a mould which bears sufficient relation to our modern measures to create a feeling of dissatisfaction with a mere prose transference, and of greater or less pleasure with every approach to a perfect reproduction in form as well as in substance. Nay, some of the ancient measures are so exactly identical with our own, and have such a natural fitness to express a certain flow of feeling and play of fancy, that to translate passages of which they are the drapery into any other movement would justly be considered as great an impropriety as causing an Irishman to foot his national dance to the tune of a Scotch reel, instead of to his own native jig. Every schoolboy who ever sung to himself

Σέλω λέγειν Ἀτρεΐδας  
Σέλω δὲ Κάδμον φέειν

to any of the score of modern airs to which it readily adapts itself, will understand this; and the more advanced scholar will readily bethink himself of the many light ambling and gracefully reeling comic measures in Aristophanes, the attempt to render which, in any other metre, would assuredly prove that the translator has either no ear for rhythm, or small skill in verse. Let this therefore stand undisputed. The metrical form of poetry is of its essence.

<sup>1</sup> "It does not appear that Hebrew poetry had metres, long and short syllables. The varieties thence arising did not belong to it. Its characteristics are a certain rhythm, consisting in measured parallel numbers, as well as peculiar words, forms and significations of words, and grammatical construc-

tions" (Davidson's *Bibl. Crit.* vol. i. p. 18); though it ought to be mentioned that Dr. Forbes, of Donaldson's Hospital, Edinburgh, has published his conviction that in certain of the Psalms of David a regular accentual rhythm, as in modern poetry, is obvious.

The Muses always dance, or at least march to a tune ; they never walk merely ; they are in no hurry to reach a goal, as our post-couriers are, and our railway mails. They rather wish that you shall forget the journey in the graceful bends which they perform while making it.

Verse, therefore, of some kind, in translating Homer, we must have, and the kind of verse which the original demands is also definable within certain limits. We must either have the identical verse, as in the Aristophanic choruses of which we were talking, or a corresponding equivalent ; if not exactly the same thing, something as like it as possible, something fairly analogous. Now this analogy is of two kinds, essential and accidental. An essential analogy exists between any two measures of the same natural quality, and of a similar compass. All triple measures, for instance, are analogous to each other in point of quality ; all trimeters, tetrameters, pentameters, etc. in point of compass. But no one who knows the rudiments of music would assert that two bars of music marked  $\frac{3}{8}$  and  $\frac{2}{4}$ , or, as the prosodians denote it,  $\sim \sim \sim$  and  $- -$ , have any rhythmical quality in common. They are, on the contrary, by the laws of the human ear, and by the constitution of the universe, altogether and fundamentally opposed. But there are analogies in the world of metres, as in other domains of the fine arts, founded not like these on essential differences, but on accidental associations. The norm of heroic verse, for instance, in English, with the single exception of Milton, was long the ten-syllabled couplet ; the corresponding norm in Italian is the *ottava rima*. Whatever considerations, therefore, of metrical analogy, led Pope, as an Englishman of Queen Anne's time, to choose the ten-syllabled couplet as the fittest medium for expressing the Homeric hexameter, the same considerations dominant in an

Italian translator would have dictated the choice of the *ottava rima* for the same purpose. That neither Caesarotti nor Monti actually did so is only a proof that they felt as Cowper did in this matter, not as Pope. They did not wish to rhyme. But if they had rhymed, Tasso would have been their natural model. For in these matters the habit of the popular ear and the law of association will always have a voice.

Applying these observations to the case of Homer, the first question that meets us is one that has recently been much debated. Are English hexameters desirable, or even possible? For if they are desirable generally, as a form of English metrical composition, there can be no doubt of their special propriety in the case of Homer. In such an English Homer, we imagine, we should have a perfect photograph of the divine Maeonian, and luxuriate in every hair of his beard, as in the grand old heads from the careful hand of Albrecht Dürer. This is, no doubt, a pleasant idea for the scholarly imagination to delight itself withal, a pleasant idea for some part of the public also, both from its own intrinsic value, if it could be realized, and for the boldness of an innovation so grateful to an age of great literary production, more desirous sometimes to be stimulated by what is new than to be nourished by what is true. But before taking any step to meet such a demand, a prudent man, and a man who has walked safely in the grand highways of our great English masters of verse, will find many reasons to think seriously. It is natural enough that professional scholars and academically bred men, whose ears are full of the splendid ease and simple grandeur<sup>1</sup> of the Greek hexameter, should

<sup>1</sup> " 'Twas Nature, noblest of poetic guides,  
Gave thee thy flowing verse, whose copious tides  
With splendid ease, and simple grandeur roll."

Hayley, *On Epic Poetry*.

look with favour on the proposal to make Homer march before the British people in every step precisely as he did to the Æolians of Cumæ, and the Ionians of Smyrna, some three thousand years ago ; and Professor Arnold thinks that academic men are the only competent judges in such questions. If the Provost of Eton, and the Professors of Greek in Oxford and Cambridge, shall only agree that hexameters are the orthodox form for an English translation of the *Iliad*, then the English public, who are accustomed to bow to authority in ecclesiastical matters, will subscribe the æsthetical articles of the University also without scruple.<sup>1</sup> I fear this is claiming a great deal more for the soundness of academic judgment, and for the extent of academic influence in this island, than either past history warrants, or the powerful instinct of individuality in the British people will be willing to allow. Scholars are sometimes narrow-minded ; and professors are as much given to crotchets and hobby-horses as any other members of the community. But, even supposing the scholars to be not only philologists but philosophers, there are two factors in every question of translation, the factor of the original language, and the factor of the translating language, and in respect of the latter the likings and dislikings, the habits and associations of the popular ear, have a plain right to be heard as well as the predilections of scholars. But hexameters, it will be said, are no longer an academical plaything ; they already live amongst the people ; they were launched into existence, not by a clique of metrical martinets in Oxford, but in America, by the free poet of a great free people. Who does not know Longfellow's 'Evangeline' ? Evangeline is unquestionably a very noticeable fact ; but that a great innovation in the hereditary

<sup>1</sup> Arnold, *On Translating Homer*, p. 4.

laws of our English poetry should have proceeded from the democratic Americans, always, like the ancient Athenians, itching for something new, will not certainly recommend this experiment to any sound-minded English writer, any more than if its authors had been the academic triumvirate to whom Professor Arnold thinks that questions of this kind ought to be referred. But 'Evangeline,' we shall be told, is a very popular poem. Yes, I reply; and deservedly so. But does it owe this popularity to the measure in which it is written, or has it not rather achieved it in spite of the measure? I know some persons who both read and write English hexameters with great pleasure; but their ear has had a peculiar training; and there are other persons of a peculiarly delicate sensibility for rhythm, to whom every new measure, if cleverly handled, gives a pleasure, merely as such; but the great mass of the public, I suspect, are not so constituted. They read 'Evangeline' to themselves, and they like it; but ask them to read it aloud, and they will murder the verse; they will confess that the measure rather incommodes them; they do not know what to make of it. Certainly, to hear them, it is not Apollo's march that is beating, with Terpsichore at his side, but a tune to keep time with the thin shanked celestial smith, when he played skinker to the immortal gods, and caused the starry roof of Olympus to shake with peals of inextinguishable laughter. Undeniable it seems that English hexameters, as hitherto written, whether by an American poet or by an Oxford professor, are apt to limp lamentably, and make the sublime lodge far too close to its dangerous neighbour, the ridiculous. I for one have long been of opinion that Clough had the true instinct with regard to this metrical novelty, when he used it for that playful humorous idyllic epic of the Scottish Highlands, which

all readers of poetry in this country have long learned to love and to admire.<sup>1</sup> If it be otherwise, I should like to know why none of our great poets, who showed a special genius for rhythm, in these latter days, chose to peril their reputation upon a great poem in hexameter verse? Southey made an experiment in 'Thalaba,' a great and a successful metrical experiment, in every way worthy of his large and various genius; but though the composite whole of the rhythmical character of this remarkable poem was something entirely new to the English public, the individual verses were mostly only variations of the common iambic, which Byron declared, and long experience has proved, to be the most consonant to the genius of our English tongue. The same is true of Coleridge, the same of Tennyson, both poets of the most subtle and the most varied rhythmical capacity, but whose short specimens of verses in classical measures can only be looked on as curious experiments to amuse an idle hour.<sup>2</sup> Depend upon it, these great masters avoided the hexameter, not certainly because it did not give a certain gratification to their classically trained ears, but because they felt it could not be handled largely without doing violence to the genius of the English language, and because they knew that the English, as a people, are "peculiarly intolerant of metrical innovations."<sup>3</sup> And if their wisdom, planted as they were, on what, without undue vanity, I trust we may call the highest poetical platform in Europe, in this century, abstained in this matter from gratifying themselves in what to them would have proved, if nothing higher, certainly a most agreeable

<sup>1</sup> *The Bothie of Tuber-na-vuolich.* and other metrical "experiments" of By Arthur Clough, to whom scholars the Laureate in *Enoch Arden and* are indebted for an accurately revised *other Poems*, 1864. edition of Dryden's *Plutarch*.

<sup>2</sup> See the English hendecasyllables *Judgment*.

<sup>3</sup> Southey, Preface to *Vision of*

recreation, can we think the translator is wise, who, with no claims to legislate for the public ear, boldly rushes into the contest of the British Muses with a mask which only the few initiated know, and a pace which to every normal English ear appears ridiculous? The translator, in his humble position as an interpreter between people and people, has no creative function in respect of rhythmical forms to exercise. He is executing a commission for the nation, in which position his only virtues are obedience, prudence, and tact. The moment he affects the dictator, he is punished.

This practical consideration would of itself have been sufficient for me, in inducing a determination not to attempt the translation of Homer into hexameter verse. But as the question is curious, and as no little confusion of idea prevails on the subject, and as the opposite view to that which I advocate boasts the support and the example of not a few names deservedly high in the estimation of the British public, I shall not shun here to set forth formally those reasons, of a strictly scientific character, which many years ago convinced me that the classical hexameter is not a fit measure for a grave narrative poem in the English language.<sup>1</sup>

On no branch of scholarship in this country does so much vagueness prevail as on accent, quantity, and metres. In no country have the ingenious youth who people schools and colleges, through long generations, been so tortured by the mere mechanical formalism of prosody and metres, with so little living insight into the nature of rhythm, as a formative principle in the regulation of human speech, and in the constitution of the universe. This whole subject, in our

<sup>1</sup> See paper on English Hexameters in *Classical Museum* (1847), vol. iv. p. 320, by J. S. B.

great schools and colleges, has been taught rather by dead rules than by the quick appreciation of the ear, and without the slightest reference to musical science, of which the doctrine of metres is a part. In the neglect of music and of declamation in our great classical schools, is to be found the true origin of that wretched confusion of ideas, which seldom fails to come to the surface whenever Englishmen commence any discussion implying a knowledge of the living intonation of Greek and Roman speech, as it was practised by the ancients.<sup>1</sup> We have entangled ourselves in such a web of contradictions and absurdities, by our careless scholastic practices, that it is no wonder if, especially in the case of persons ignorant of the first principles of music, nature and reason and common sense, and the authority of ancient grammarians, appeal in vain to inform us of the real practice of the ancients in singing, chanting, or reciting poetry. The matter, however, if we have courage to shake ourselves free from bad habits, and the dead letter of scholastic tradition, is by no means difficult to apprehend. Ancient poetry was a part of music, and followed the laws of that science. Modern poetry is only colloquial address elevated into a certain rhythmical flow, and follows the laws of common conversation. How readily it can slip into the purest colloquial tone, Mrs. Browning has shown with great felicity in many parts of her great poem, 'Aurora Leigh.' The familiar technical words of the doctrine

<sup>1</sup> This is no accusation of mine exclusively, but is allowed by the English themselves. "Few, even of accomplished scholars, are accustomed to anything like a correct way of reading Greek and Latin verse" (Cayley, *On English Hexameters*, Berlin, 1863); that is, as he goes on to show, they do not pay any practical attention even to the most elementary rules of prosody, which, in their abstract shape, they press upon unripe wits with such formal pertinacity.

of prosody and metres—tribrachs, dactyls, anapaests,—are all borrowed from the books of the musicians, and are as essentially musical in their significance as *allegro* and *andantino*, *crescendo*, and *diminuendo* in the score of a modern piece of music. An anapaestic metre is only a bar of common or march time; a dochmiac is a bar of  $\frac{9}{8}$ , with the accents placed so as to interrupt the equable flow of the tribrachic measure, thus—



to express the inequality of violently excited emotion. This being so, we must seek for the peculiar laws of ancient metrical composition in the special demands and necessities of music; and these specialties will contain a characteristic of all ancient verse compositions, which renders them specifically different from the modern compositions which bear the same name.<sup>1</sup> Now, the musical element in language, that element which the sung poetry of an *ἀοιδός* or minstrel, as distinguished from the read poetry of a modern literary man, did instinctively appropriate, is what prosodians call quantity, that is, the vowel element, and specially the deep, full, and prolonged utterance of the vowels in what are technically called long syllables. Any one may see that the word *hall*, for instance, is much more musical than the word *hat*; and the musical character of the Italian language depends plainly on the abundance of such long, deep vowel-sounds—*are*, *ore*, *oso*, etc., in its terminational flexions. The same musical

<sup>1</sup> It should be carefully noted here that I do not discuss the question how far, in the progress of literary culture, elocutionary recitation may, in certain kinds of poetry, have taken the place of the original song or chant. I only say that all Greek poetry was originally a part of music, and one with music, and the laws of its verse grew out of musical principles which have no application to such purely elocutional poetry as we now write.

necessity it was that created that characteristic dominance of the spondee, instead of the iambus or trochee, and of the dactyl instead of the tribrach, which appears with such severe laws of uniformity in all forms of classical poetry. A verse was not good to their musically-trained ears that had not a certain sustaining weight of vocalism, not only in the verse generally, but at certain fixed places of the verse ; a limitation evidently made to bind down the metre of poetry to the laws of that music from which it sprang, and prevent it from degenerating into the loose and arbitrary rhythm that characterizes the declamation of spoken prose. Another peculiarity of ancient verse necessarily dictated by music, is that in the composition of poetry no regard was paid to the spoken accents of the words,<sup>1</sup> but the full musical value of the syllables at the proper places being always secured, the poet might be considered to have performed his duty, and the composition then fell under the complete control of the musical composer, who, under the name of *ρυθμοποιός*, adjusted the words to the proper musical accent or rhythm. Not that the poet wrote, or could write, without the living law of the musical rhythm in his ear. He was always a musically trained man, sometimes himself a musician ; nevertheless in the presentation of the piece, the superintendence of a professional musician was always expedient, and in composite measures his aid might often be necessary to correct or modify, or fully to bring out the rhythmical feeling of the poet. The practical result of this predominance of the

<sup>1</sup> The occasional regard seemingly paid to the spoken accent in the cadence of Latin hexameters I regard as accidental, and arising from the nature of the Latin accent, which easily coincided with the rhythmical *ictus* in the close of the hexameter, never so in the close of the pentameter or iambic verse. If the Greeks had accented *εθηκεν* (Il. 1. 2) as the Romans did *legebat*, on the penult, a similar coincidence would have followed.

musical element, as affecting the spoken accent, appears to us strange ; words were regularly sung in the tragic airs (*μέλος*), and in the recitative parts of the Greek drama, with a different accent from that used in common conversation ; just as if we should systematically adopt the practice of our old ballads, and say in our poetry *ladyc* for *lady*, *marinére* for *mariner*, and so forth. But habit is all-powerful in such matters ; and so far from the shifting of the accent being an offence to well-cultivated ears, it might rather tend to mark out poetry more distinctly from prose, as in the poetical pronunciation of certain final syllables in French, and other phenomena of the same kind, traceable to a certain extent in all languages. Such were unquestionably the facts ; for if the spoken accents so essential to well-read prose<sup>1</sup> had been of any value in the composition of verse, we should certainly have had a chapter on this head in Hephæstion, Draco, and other metrical treatises of the ancients, which we have not. But why did the ancients adopt this strange rule ? Why did they not so construct their verses as that both the quantity of the syllables should agree with the musical value of the notes, and the accent of spoken speech harmonize with the recurrent beat of the time in music ? This question is best answered by another, Why do our modern poets content themselves, when the colloquial accent, according to which they compose, agrees with the rhythmical accent of the music, and concerning themselves no farther, give you constantly short syllables for a crotchet or minim in the music,

<sup>1</sup> Τί ἔστι τὸ διαγνώσκειν κατὰ τροσ-  
ωδίαν ; Ηγουν κατὰ τούς διαφεύς τόνους.  
τροσωδία γάρ ὁ τόνος, καὶ δεῖ τὸν τόνον  
ἀρχῆθεν κατορθοῦν τὴν διαγνώσιν κατὰ  
τροσωδίαν καὶ τόνον (Theodosius, Gram-  
mat. Goettling. Lips. 1822, p. 58); a  
precept of which our English school.

men systematically take no account, as  
indeed they make no scruple of flinging  
overboard any precept of the ancient  
grammarians which either disturbs  
their habits or contradicts their tradi-  
tions.

and long syllables with equal lawlessness for quavers? Why is a short syllable like *b/iss* often drawn out in music to the length of a minim, and why do we sing *Gōd* in the church often as if it were written *goad*? Plainly because to harmonize both the accent and the quantity of the words with the accent and the quantity of the music, would be too great a demand on the poet, would limit him too much in his choice of words; therefore of the two elements which belong to a perfect congruity between the poetry and the music, we select that which suits best the spoken character of our poetry, that is, the accent,<sup>1</sup> while the Greeks, whose poetry was essentially musical, chose the metrical element, viz., the quantity. About this point, therefore, there should be no difficulty.

The bearing of these remarks on English hexameters is extremely important. Whosoever will write any of the more weighty forms of ancient metre according to the exact ancient model in English—for there is less difficulty in some forms of iambic verse, which, as Aristotle says, is more near to prose,<sup>2</sup>—must bear in mind that he is not only writing in a form of verse to which the public ear has not been trained, but he is composing according to rhythmical laws which run right in the teeth of the whole principles and practice, not only of the English, but of all modern schools of poetry;<sup>3</sup> or, if

<sup>1</sup> The “*Accentus est anima vocis*” of Diomede applies, of course, only to prose; in verse the quantity is the soul.

<sup>2</sup> Μάλιστα γάρ λεκτικὸν τὸν μέτρων τὸ λαυρεῖον (*Poet.* iv.) as opposed to the trochaic tetrameter, which in another passage he calls a dancing measure.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Cayley, in the dissertation above quoted, says that “classical translators will never do creditably

any fraction of the work that lies before them, until they become exact imitators of both the accentual and quantitative combinations of the ancients, and this not only in poetry, but in prose.” This would be a sort of photography in translating, which not even the Germans, who stick at no kind of erudite mechanics, have attempted; but if any Englishman of studious habits should execute a translation on this principle,

he does not choose to do this (and no man of any sense would waste his time on such perverse and unprofitable experiments), then he must write not the same verse, but a similar verse, on an altogether different principle; and he ought to let it be publicly understood that he does so. And this latter course is exactly that which Klopstock, Voss, and the whole tribe of German hexametrists after them, by a natural instinct of the modern ear, have followed; the effect of which has, of course, been that the ancient spondee, which represents four times, is changed at will into the modern trochee, which represents three times, and even the Pyrrhic, which represents two; that is to say, the character of the verse is radically changed; the analogy which was sought to be established is destroyed; your rhythmical photograph is there, line for line, extremely accurate, but the soul is gone. Take, in illustration, the first verse of the German version of the Iliad by Voss—

“ Singe den Zorn, O Göttinn, des Peleiaden Achilleus.”

The first foot is a tribrach. If you say that the first syllable is long by position, I reply that by position the ancients understood a vowel before two consonants *really pronounced long*, as in the German *öbst*, *Päpst*, or the English *göld*, *föld*, not the mere concurrence of two consonants, which no doubt help to sustain the voice a little when the accent is laid on them, but never can make it long.<sup>1</sup> The same thing comes out in the opening line of Mr. Dart's English translation<sup>2</sup>—

he may rest assured that no British ear will receive it without positive pain and torture, except his own.

<sup>1</sup> On this point I am glad to see Cayley (p. 9) agrees. I mention this particularly, because nothing is more common in discussions by Englishmen on rhythm, than to assume that in

English a syllable is always long, merely because the vowel is followed by two consonants, as if quantities were to be judged of by the eye, and not by the ear!

<sup>2</sup> *The Iliad of Homer, in English Hexameter Verse.* By Henry Dart. London, 1865.

“ Sing, O Muse divine, the implacable wrath of Achilles.”

Here the only spondee in the line is the first foot, and that not in its own nature, but only by the effect of the pause after the imperative; for the same rule prevails in English generally as in German,—a vowel before a double consonant is short; *sing* is naturally short. Now, if these observations are correct, it follows that whosoever translates a Latin or Greek hexameter after the model which alone is intelligible to a modern ear, is transferring march time into triple time,—is rendering a measure which, according to the testimony of the ancients, was characterized by weight and dignity,<sup>1</sup> into a measure of which the characteristic is either a light, undulating, careless ease, or the hurried march of highly-excited passion. That this is the fact the consistent practice of our whole English poetry proves, which seldom uses verses accented on every third syllable, except in the two cases just mentioned. And if the range of pure tribrachic measure, or of tribrachs intermingled with trochees, appears much wider in our song-books than in volumes of poetry written to be read, it is just because the whole genius of lyric poetry, as distinguished from narrative poetry, is characterized by a passionate excitement, differing as widely as possible from the steady march of dignified prose or noble epic. Of all this Southey showed his usual fine instinct, when he introduced the triple measure in the following passage of ‘Thalaba,’ expressive of hurry and excitement:—

“ Now go thy way, Abdaldar !  
Servant of Eblis,

<sup>1</sup> πάση σεμεῖον.—Dionys. Hal. *De Struct. Oral.* xvii. See, for a complete examination of all the authorities on this subject, my *Essay on the Rhyth- mical Declamation of the Ancients* (Edinburgh, 1852. Edmonston and Douglas), originally published in the *Classical Museum*.

Over Arabia  
Seek the Destroyer !  
Over the sands of the scorching Tehama,  
Over the waterless mountains of Nayd ;  
In Arud pursue him, and Yemen the happy,  
And Hejaz, the country beloved by believers,  
Over Arabia,  
Servant of Eblis,  
Seek the Destroyer !”<sup>1</sup>

But does any person imagine that with this form of measure, or any variety of the triple rhythm, of which English hexameter is one, he could have produced the solemnizing effect of the opening stanza of the same poem ?

“ How beautiful is night !  
A dewy freshness fills the silent air ;  
No mist obscures, nor cloud, nor speck, nor stain,  
Breaks the serene of heaven ;  
In full-orb’d glory yonder Moon divine  
Rolls through the dark blue depths.  
Beneath her steady ray  
The desert-circle spreads,  
Like the round ocean, girdled with the sky.  
How beautiful is night !”

My conclusion is that English hexameter verse, on whatever theoretical principles composed, will always fall on the English ear with something of that light tripping or impetuous racing character which belongs to other varieties of that measure familiar to our ears, and is utterly unfit for the grave weight of continuous epic narrative.

But there are other objections of scarcely less weight. Our Saxon monosyllables, as every one knows, are the great strength of our language, but they are also, as Dryden often

complained, the great hindrance to melody in English verse; do, in fact, render the melody in which rich terminational languages luxuriate, practically impossible in our tongue. Every independent monosyllable, not to mention the harsh consonantal aggregation which in English generally belongs to it, must stand on its own legs, and have its separate emphasis, otherwise it falls into the position of an enclitic and is lost. But this accent of the separate word of course interferes with the accent of the verse, if in no worse way, at least by rendering it less prominent; and if this is always the case to a certain extent, in a language of which monosyllables form the staple, the effect will be doubly bad when two separate big-boned words take their place, as they often will do in the unaccented parts of a dactylic or tribrachic bar. Thus, when Campbell sings,

“There came to the beach a poor exile of Erin,”

the movement is evidently dactylic, or, if you choose, anapaestic, for there is no fundamental difference between the two metres, and this first line reads pleasantly enough, notwithstanding the monosyllable *poor*, for other reasons, and perhaps chiefly from the natural cæsura after the word *beach*; but in the second line,

“The | dew on his | thin robe was | heavy and chill,”

every one feels how the three little words that compose the second foot do not flow pleasantly into one foot, as in the case of

Μῆνιν ἄειδε, Ήεδα, Πηληγάδεω 'Αχιλῆος,

or

“Arma virumque cano Trojæ qui primus ab oris.”

So in M'Neill's beautiful ballad, ‘Mary of Castlecary’:—

“ Her hair it is lint-white,  
Her skin it is milk-white,  
Dark is the blue o’ her saft-rolling e’e,  
Red, red her ripe lips, and sweeter than roses,  
Whaur could my wee thing wander frae me?”

that man has no ear for lyrical composition, who does not single out the *ripe lips and*, as the most unmusical foot in the whole stanza. If, on the other hand, a wielder of English hexameters, in translating Homer, in order to give his dactyls a more musical flow, should deal largely in polysyllables, he will not only restrict his choice of words immensely, but, in all likelihood, deviate from that simplicity of expression so characteristic of the old minstrel. Surely these difficulties, founded in the very nature of our English speech, with which the English hexametrist finds himself beset, should be sufficient to show both the wisdom of our great ancient masters in never having employed tribrachic, or so-called dactylic or anapæstic measures for any continuous weighty narrative in verse, and the folly of our modern hexametrists in flirting with a foreign beauty, with whom, in the very nature of the case, they can never be united in any comfortable wedlock.

But there is yet more to be said. Not only strict dactylic and tribrachic measure, but even trochaic, has been generally avoided by the great masters of our English verse in long compositions, and this plainly from the difficulty of dealing with certain feeble little words, such as *of, to, for, the*, which the order of our language requires to be placed in the van. This circumstance causes a writer of trochees constantly to use an initial Pyrrhic for a trochee, by which the verse loses weight, or even to prefix an unaccentuated short syllable, which changes the measure into iambic. The

only considerable poem in English trochees, accordingly, of any merit or popularity, that I know, is 'Hiawatha,' by Longfellow; but the success of this measure in that singular poem was one of those happy strokes of genius which prove the rule by exception, and which no man will dare to repeat without finding that he has made an egregious blunder. Lastly, the modern hexameter, however skilfully executed, comes on the English ear without any associations,<sup>1</sup> and this is certainly a very grave objection. It is utterly destitute of any character which the English reader can understand; it conveys nothing, suggests nothing. It neither represents the epic element in Homer, like our blank verse, nor the minstrel element, as the ballad measure does; and if it is not altogether unmeaning, it is certainly altogether undignified.

Such are the arguments which have convinced me that hexameter verse is unsuited for any weighty effort of the British narrative Muse. Other reasons, specially bearing on Homer, will appear immediately, when we shall have examined the question of rhyme; for if rhyme be desirable in translating the Iliad, rhymed hexameters are out of the question. They jar on the habit of the scholarly ear, as much as hexameters in any shape on the habit of the general English ear.

Dismissing hexameters, therefore, as a novelty, more amusing to scholars than consonant to the genius of the English language, let us look about among old recognised English measures for one that may seem best to answer the conditions of the translator's problem in the present case. Here, in the very outset, a great difficulty confronts us. For

<sup>1</sup> This point is well insisted on by | Translation of Schiller's Ballads (p. x.)  
Sir E. L. Bulwer in his Preface to his | Blackwood, 1852.

if the reader is convinced, either from his own feeling and observation, or from the statements in *Discourses* v. and vii., that in the *Iliad* we have two elements combined—the large plan and lofty tone of the epic poem, with the plainness, simplicity, directness, and blunt naturalness of the popular ballad—then the conditions of a good translation of that poem become as obvious as they are difficult. Like caricatures, or strong mannerism in drawing, extreme styles in writing are more easy of poetic imitation than medium or moderate styles. The severe and stately sublime of Milton, though perhaps equally rare in nature, would certainly be more easily rendered in translation than the easy, graceful elevation of Homer. Add to this, that in our language, or rather in the whole history of modern literature, we have no model of that grand combination of simple material with noble tone and massive structure which the *Iliad* presents. Our early English and Scotch ballads were never elevated into national epic, never culminated in that perfect form in which they would have been at once the most precious records of past heroism, and the most finished models of present culture. Chaucer, as we had occasion to remark above, is that English poet who, in point of tone and style, as well as in chronology, has the nearest affinity to Homer; but Chaucer wrote no epic; he was a story-teller, a rhyming novelist, of the highest class indeed, but not a great epic artist. Coming further down with the stream of our great English literature, we find that our normal Christian epic, the '*Paradise Lost*,' does not appear till the second epoch of a completely literary and highly intellectual age. If Shakespeare and the Elizabethans, in our literary history, may perhaps in point of position fitly be compared to Pindar, Aeschylus, and the writers contemporary with the first great

Persian wars, then Milton takes his place with Euripides and Sophocles, and the immediate precursors of Plato. He is a thoroughly equipped scholar, a thinker, a theologian, and so deeply steeped in all the learning of his day, that he has been accused by a high authority of "seeing nature through the spectacles of books," an accusation which, if even in a slight degree true, puts him at the furthest possible remove from the intellectual position of Homer. Our ballad, therefore, is not epic in its tone; and our epic is not Homeric. The Germans, some one will think, have been more fortunate, and in their *Niebelungen* lay possess a treasure of ancient Burgundian and Scandinavian ballads, which have culminated into a true epic. This is undoubtedly true in point of mere external form; but impartial critics, uninfluenced by the fond patriotism of the Germans, will scarcely recognise in that production an epic poem sufficiently high in tone, or rich in genius, to serve as a model for a modern German *Iliad*. After all that Beneke, Lachmann, and other great philologists have done for it, the *Niebelungen* never had any strong hold of the national mind in *Deutschland*. It has lived now for more than half a century a life beyond the Rhine, rather of erudite resuscitation than of continued powerful popular influence, such as Homer enjoyed among the Greeks. Homer therefore has no corresponding type in modern European literature. He stands alone in his age, in his style, and in his influence. Such being the case, the translator is reduced to a plain dilemma, and must consent to a compromise. By no course that he can adopt will he be able to convey to a modern English reader the full and complete impression of what Homer was to the Greeks.<sup>1</sup> If,

<sup>1</sup> Blair (Lect. 43), who is always | many persons who now despise him, judicious, and often much deeper than | says, "I know no author to whom it is

on the one hand, he adopt the ballad tone and form, he will appear to be deficient in epic dignity ; if, again, he strike the epic key, he will be told that the lofty pomp of phrase which that style demands, is utterly inconsistent with the plainness, directness, and simplicity of diction, which even those who most belaud his " nobleness," consider to be no less characteristic of the Maeonian minstrel. We have no reason therefore to be surprised, if some of the most famous names in English literature, who have given us masterly specimens of Homeric translation in some aspects, have failed to satisfy all the conditions of the problem. In fact, they have generally seen only one side of Homer, and turned that exclusively upon public view. Pope, I remember well, talks grandly about the patriarchal simplicity of Homer in his Preface ; but he shows no trace of it in the style of his translation. Maginn and Newman<sup>1</sup> had the great merit of flinging abroad the germ of truth that lay at the bottom of the Wolfian theory in a popular shape upon English ears ; but did they make the proper distinction in their minds between the ballad materials which Homer used and the epic artist which Homer was ? The union of apparent incompatibles is here, as in other cases, the law of the highest excellence ; and after what has been done and written on the subject, those who shall now attempt the problem have one advantage at least over some of the most distinguished of their predecessors, —they may see clearly the conditions that belong to a successful solution. Is it possible, with the literary instrument of the English tongue, to give the plain-

more difficult to do justice in translation than Homer ;" and the reasons he gives, though not formally the same, spring fundamentally out of the same root as the view presented in the text.

<sup>1</sup> *Homeric Ballads.* By Wm. Maginn, 1849. *The Iliad of Homer.* By F. W. Newman. London, 1856.

ness of the Homeric phrase without baldness, its directness without coarseness, its familiarity without vulgarity, and its natural lofty ease without affected majesty? I think it is, at least up to a certain point—a point that for all practical purposes may be held sufficient; and in endeavouring to realize this ideal one of two methods of procedure may be adopted: either, *first*, taking the English blank verse, or ten-syllabled heroic couplet, as the norm, to preserve in that form a noble simplicity of diction, free from any tinge of that majestic pomp, curious artifice, and excessive refinement of phrase, which characterize the epic of literary culture; or, *second*, taking some ballad measure as the norm, to keep the characteristic directness and simplicity of that style free from the undignified carelessness, and occasional meanness and coarseness into which it is apt to fall.

Of these two alternatives I prefer the latter, for the following reasons:—

I consider, as the whole drift and gist of the previous discourses will have rendered evident, that the characteristic element in Homer is that of the *ἀοιδός*, or singing minstrel, as opposed to the epic poet of literary culture; and it appears to me scarcely possible to give this element due prominence in English blank or decasyllabic verse. The traditions of the English language and the habits of the English ear are both against it.

On the other hand, it is comparatively easy to keep some varieties of the ballad measure habitually elevated in that region where Homer's Muse with dignified simplicity moves. Our ballad measures possess every grade of artistic excellence from the hasty rattle, or the incurious slip-slop of a popular street song, newly struck out to serve the need of an election contest, to the rapid roll of Tennyson's 'Locksley

Hall,' the fervid war tramp of Scott's battle-pieces, and the pictorial pomp of some of Macaulay's and Aytoun's historical processions.<sup>1</sup>

Again, I am partial to ballad measure because it implies rhyme, and some forms of it possess a greater wealth of vocal consonance than belongs to any other form of English metre appropriate for narrative poetry. Now, rhyme is not only by long centuries of prescriptive right the popular occupant of the English and European poetic throne, but there is a special propriety in the music of verbal consonances, in translation from a language like the Greek, whose flexional terminations make it peculiarly rich in consonances of that description, not the less powerfully affecting the ear because

<sup>1</sup> Professor Arnold (*Last Words on Translating Homer*), to my offer, in *Macmillan's Magazine* (1861), to come half-way to meet him on the ballad question, replies, "I cannot allow that Homer's poetry is ballad poetry at all." I never said it was, in the sense in which the learned professor seems to take it. What I say is, that Homer contains a strong and characteristic ballad element, exactly as Scott contains a strong ballad element, though nobody, of course, would call the 'Lady of the Lake' a ballad. With what he further says (p. 64), that "Homer is rather to be classed with Milton than with Scott," I cannot agree, unless in the special relation acknowledged in Dissertation vii., *supra*. Homer may be, and I certainly think he is, a more large and lofty Scott, but he is not a Milton at all. I have only further to say, that some of Arnold's criticisms on the ballad style as applicable to Homer are evidently most partial and unfair. The line, for instance, in the *Odyssey* (vix. 392) -

νίσε δ' ἀρ' ἀστον ιούσα ἀράχθ οὐρ' αὐρία δ'  
ἔρνο οὐλήν.

Maginn renders—

" And scarce had she begun to wash,  
 Ere she was aware of the grisly gash  
 Above his knee that lay."

Now the "grisly gash," applied in a cheap and utterly false melodramatic style to a dry old scar, is certainly in the very worst taste. But the same phrase might have been used in hexameters, and would not have been a whit better:

" Near to his knee came her hand, and her  
 eye beheld on the instant  
 Grisly the gash, which the strong white  
 tusk of the boar had indented."

And if the sensitive professor complains that, apart from this melodramatic taint, the rhythm of the octosyllabic verse "leaves a jingling in his ears which is positive torture," I can only thank Heaven that my auricular organs are not so fastidious. I can enjoy the ballad aspect of Homer in Maginn as well as the stately epic tramp of the Vossian hexame'er.

they do not strike it regularly at the close of the couplet.<sup>1</sup> Homer, moreover, is a writer who, precisely because he does not fill the understanding with a closely-packed weight of condensed thought, like Æschylus, Dante, and Milton, requires the support of rhyme to prevent his appearing flat or feeble in many passages. A literal translation of some parts of Homer would be intolerable, from the baldness of our monosyllabic roots. The musical element in Homer's language, and the musical charm of the minstrel song which he sang, is best represented in our uninflected modern languages by rhyme.

On this head one or two objections to rhyme may be mentioned. What Cowper declared, that "a just translation of any ancient poem in rhyme is impossible," rests on that confusion of a just translation with a minutely verbal one, the error of which has been already exposed. I have never yet encountered a difficulty in rhyme, however formidable at the first glance, that could not be overcome by perseverance and ingenuity. When a man talks of the "fetters of rhyme," I always think either that he is lazy, or that he is a workman who does not know how to wield his tools. I could easily show, were I not purposely keeping aloof in this place from criticising living translators, that hexameter verse, when well executed, by certain necessities which it imposes on the translator, contrary to the genius of the English language, creates a kind of fetters much more difficult to move gracefully in than common English rhyme. Even the imitation of the political verse of the Greeks by Professor Newman, where the double ending is imperative, has,

<sup>1</sup> See the *Stabat Mater*, ver. 2, 6. dency of the Latin language to rhyme. This beautiful hymn presents some in the middle of the line, like our striking examples of the natural ten-ballad measure.

in my opinion, certainly been the cause of not a few of those quaint and ungainly expressions for which he has been so severely handled by his critics. A special objection to rhyme in translating Homer, advanced by Arnold, "that it inevitably tends to pair lines which in the original are independent," if consistently followed out, would imply that the couplet generally should never be used in continuous narrative; for it is manifest that narrative can never be composed of a number of little metrical unities bound together by a law of their own. What the Professor means, I suppose, is that rhyme should never be so used, either in translating Homer, or anywhere, as to tear asunder any two verses that naturally hang together; and in this opinion I entirely agree. It is the manner of Homer, as I shall show presently, to close his sense almost always with the line, generally with the close of the couplet, the triplet, or the quatrain. All such metrical coherences, I have in my version been particularly cautious to observe, using triplets, for instance, invariably in the English, wherever three lines in the original comprehend a perfectly complete and self-contained sense. I do not think, however, that the usage of our best English writers, from Chaucer downwards, justifies the daintiness with which Arnold treats rhyme in reference to this point. In the shape of a general denunciation he seems to be merely expressing his dislike of the strange chopping and cutting up of his lines and rhymes, which are part of Chapman's manner; and to his dictum, understood with this special application, every man of taste, I presume, will at once subscribe.

What was said above about the propriety of modern rhyme to represent ancient terminational consonances, seems to me to have been overlooked by the advocates of blank

verse and hexameter, and may deserve a word of explanation. In the line,

δεινὴ δὲ κλαγγὴ γένετ' ἀργυρέοιο βιδιο,

and

ἐν πεδίῳ σόλοσι λιλαιόμενοι πολέμοιο,

and

πάντες κ' ὡκύμοροί τε γενοίατο πικρόγαμοί τε,

and hundreds the like with which Homer abounds, we see a sort of sectional rhyme,<sup>1</sup> so necessarily arising out of the character of terminational languages, that sometimes in Homer it assumes the shape of our modern final rhyme,<sup>2</sup> and is so frequent in certain places of the Ovidian pentameter as fully to impress the ear with the effect of a variety of our modern practice of rhyming. Now what I say is, that the luxury of the ear, to which this terminational consonance so manifestly contributes in the Greek, has a right to claim, as its nearest representative in our monosyllabic tongue, the ornament of rhyme, a grace that, like charity, sometimes covers a multitude of sins, and which, without an adequate compensation, no well-trained English ear will readily dispense with. And in this view it is interesting to observe that the Germans, who were the first to introduce the classical measures into their translated, and even their original poetry, are now beginning to reconsider their decision, and to express the strongest doubts on the propriety of this procedure, sanctioned though it has been by the great names of Goethe and Schiller. Herr Ferdinand Rinne, who

<sup>1</sup> See examples in Old English in Guest's *English Rhythms*, 1838, vol. i. p. 125. 485, 486; ii. 87; *Odys.* xi. 164; xiii. 9-11. This did not escape the eye of those minute observers, the Greek critics. See *βλος Ὄμηρον*, in Gale's

<sup>2</sup> Examples of rhyme in Homer: i. *Opusc. Mythol.* p. 300.

has translated the *Odyssey* into German *ottava rima* (an experiment precisely analogous to the adoption of the English Spenserian stanza for the same purpose by a recent accomplished English translator),<sup>1</sup> gives as his reason for a procedure so directly in the teeth of the recognised German canons in this matter, that the heavy, long-syllabled, monotonous, rhymeless German hexameter, abounding in harsh consonants, is utterly unable to supply any equivalent to the numerous assonances, alliterations, and rhymes of the soft, melodious Ionic dialect.<sup>2</sup> This is exactly the principle, I have no doubt, whether so distinctly enunciated or not, which led our great English masters, Dryden and Pope, to use rhyme habitually in their numerous translations from the antique. The genius of those men was far removed from the mechanical idea of repeating the rhythm of the original, which has produced so many erudite, unreadable abortions of translation in the German language,—a fashion of composition from which, I sincerely trust, our strong British sense, and the popular atmosphere which we breathe, may long preserve our translated literature; for it does seem to be an evil in certain regions of English scholarship, first to despise the practices of the Germans, and then, when adopting them, to overdo their peculiarities. But, however this be, the practice of the Germans in reference to hexameters can never be pleaded as a precedent for us. I for

<sup>1</sup> The *Odyssey of Homer*. By Philip Stanhope Worsley (Edinburgh, Blackwood, 1861). There is an archaic rust about Spenser's style, which may seem to suit well with Homer generally, besides a certain graceful, easy slowness, which is the peculiar characteristic of the *Odyssey*, as contrasted with the *Iliad*.

<sup>2</sup> *Homer's Odyssee in Stanzan*. Von Ferdinand Rinne (Leipzig, 1842, 2d edition), which proves that even in Germany, the native land of stiff classical photographs, there is a demand in the popular ear for the luxury of rhyme, and measures intelligible to non-academic ears.

one think that Goethe and Schiller were both wrong in lending the authority of their great names to the innovation of Klopstock in this respect. Even a great poet will sometimes be betrayed into using a less appropriate measure, for the mere luxury of making a metrical experiment; but whether right or wrong, as recognised legislators of the highest authority in the forms of poetical composition, they gave their sanction; and the aspiring young translator in Deutschland may now, by virtue of this authority, luxuriate freely in every varied form of fluttering dochmiac, winged paon, and heavy molossus, without being rated soundly, as he would be in this country, for a piece of academical impertinence, or praised feebly for an ingenious novelty. And he may moreover plead justly that the greater mass and weight, and sustained vocalism of the German language, as compared with the English, make a much nearer approach to the gravity, composedness, and stateliness of the ancient classical hexameter, than in our more lightly tripping speech is possible to be achieved.

But to return to our ballad measures. Not only is the rhyme which by tradition belongs to them an essentially Homeric element, but the couplet and the triplet also, without which their essential character is destroyed. A rhyming measure, which constantly overflows its boundary, losing one line in another, after the fashion of blank verse, can scarcely be called a natural style of composition. On the other hand, the conclusion of the sentence invariably with the last word of the couplet or the triplet, would produce a monotony, which would render any verse an inadequate exponent of poetical movement of the highest order. But the couplet, nevertheless, is the most obvious, and therefore the favourite form of all popular poetry, and can easily be shown to be the funda-

mental type of Homeric verse. Take an example of this from the Romaic ballad of the 'Taking of Constantinople,' printed at large in our first dissertation.<sup>1</sup> In this simple composition we have the sense partially completed with the first couplet, as is common in Homer, but not fully wound up till the conclusion of the third line, forming a triplet, and then with an explanation added in a fourth line, which completes the period. Then we have a period of five lines, dividing naturally into a triplet and a couplet; then a single independent line after the manner of Homer, annexed to a couplet; last of all, the concluding couplet itself. Now, those who have studied the Homeric hexameter carefully, will confirm me in the observation which I have made, that the rhythm of Homer, as an *ἀοιδός* or singing minstrel, belongs as a species to this type of the modern Romaic ballad, in respect of the position of the pauses; not at all to Milton's movement, and the English blank verse generally formed after his model; the only difference being, that while the Romaic ballad, as a low species of the genus, seldom or never rises beyond the simple type from which it started, Homer in this region also shows his consummate mastership, and asserts his character as the creator of the minstrel epic, by deviating from the even current of the couplet, triplet and quatrain, wherever the fervid flow of passion in the speaker, or the surge of emotion in his own soul induces such an overflow. On such occasions he will swell and redound into long periods of five, six, seven, or even eleven lines at a breath; but even in this case he remains true to the couplet original of his verse, by ending his period generally with the end of the line. Let us illustrate this by a few of the most obvious examples:—

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, p. 45.

Ἐννῆμαρ μὲν ἀνὰ στρατὸν ψῆφο κῆλα θεοῖσι  
τῇ δεκάτῃ δ' ἀγορήνδε καλέσσατο λαὸν Ἀχιλλεύς.  
τῷ γὰρ ἐπὶ φρεσὶ θῆκε θεὰ λευκώλενος Ἡρη·  
κῆδετο γὰρ Δαναῶν, ὅτι ῥα θνήσκοντας ὄράτο.  
οἱ δ' ἐπεὶ οὐν ἥγερθεν, ὅμηγερέες τ' ἐγένοντο,  
τοῦτοι δ' ἀνιστάμενος μετέφη πόδας ὥκὺς Ἀχιλλεύς·

Ἄτρείδη, νῦν ἄμμει παλιμπλαγχθέντας ὅιν  
ἀψὶ ἀπονοστήσειν, εἴ κεν θάνατόν γε φύγοιμεν,  
εἰ δὴ ὁμοῦ πόλεμός τε δαμῆι καὶ λοιμὸς Ἀχαιούς.  
ἀλλ' ἄγε δῆ τινα μάντιν ἐρείμεν, γῆ ἱερῆα,  
γῆ καὶ ὄνειροπόλον—καὶ γάρ τ' ὄναρ ἐκ Διός ἐστιν—  
ὅς κ' εἴποι, ὅτι τόσσον ἔχώσατο Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων,  
εἴτ' ἀρ' ὅγ' εὐχωλῆς ἐπιμέμφεται, εἴθ' ἐκατόμβης·  
αἱ κέν πως ἀρνῶν κνίσστης αἰγῶν τε τελείων  
βούλεται ἀντιδσας, ἡμῖν ἀπὸ λοιγὸν ἀμύναι.

Here we have three couplets to begin with. Then the speech of Achilles commences with a triplet, is followed by a quatrain, and ends with a couplet. Take again the well-known lines of the exordium,—

Μῆνιν ἄειδε, θεὰ, Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος,  
οὐλομένην, ἥ μιροῦ Ἀχαιοὺς ἄλγε' ἔθηκεν,  
πολλὰς δ' ἴφθίμους ψυχὰς "Αἰδί προταψεν  
ἡρώων, αὐτοὺς δὲ ἐλώρια τεῦχε κύνεσσιν  
οἰωνοῖσι τε πᾶσι—Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή—  
ἔξ οὐδὲ δὴ ταπρῶτα διαστήτην ἐρίσαντε  
Ἄτρείδης τε, ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν, καὶ δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.

Here the poet gives the complete plan of the poem in five complete lines, which resolve themselves, however, both to the sense and to the ear, into a couplet and a triplet; and then marks the event from which his story starts by a separate couplet. That this character of the rhythm holds through the whole of the Iliad, with certain variations not necessary to be detailed here, any one may convince himself by merely running over any book of the poem, and banding

with a pencil the divisions which make a natural pause, or a complete verse. Now, my position is, that rhyme is the natural adjunct and the graceful ornament of all poetry, founded, as all popular poetry is, on the couplet or the triplet; and that our English writers who used this measure later than the 'Ornulum' and other earliest productions, made a decided improvement when they added rhyme to the accented form of the old iambic tetrameter catalectic, as they received it from the popular poetry of the Byzantine Greeks; for rhyme is not only a beauty in itself, and a grateful luxury to the ear, but it helps to steady the measure, and brings out the character of the couplet with more firmness. I therefore conclude that it is an appropriate ornament for Homer also; and though I would by no means tie myself down to rhyme always exactly according to the Homeric periods, and give triplets scrupulously in every case where he has them (for this were a bondage by which a man of true poetic impulse would certainly lose more than he could gain), yet I may say, that in the version which is presented in the second part of this work, I have in all striking and important cases, by my couplets and triplets, endeavoured to bring out the marked metrical unities of the original; and whenever three lines were so bound together as that the sense and cadence were completely shut up, I have generally expressed this rhythmical compactness in the Greek by a corresponding compactness in an English triplet; or, at all events, if this were not possible, taken care that while the first line of the triplet stood free, the two last lines should rhyme together, so as to conclude the sense compactly with the last line. Take as an example the first seven lines of Book VII. :—

"Ως εἰπὼν πυλέων ἔξεσσντο φαίδμος "Εκτωρ·  
τῷ δ' ἄμ' 'Αλεξανδρος κι' ἀδελφεός" ἐν δ' ἄρα θυμῷ

αμφότεροι μέμασαν πολεμίζειν ἵδε μάχεσθαι.  
 ὡς δὲ θεὸς ναύτησιν ἐελδομένοισιν ἔδωκεν  
 οὐρον, ἐπὴν κεκάμωσιν ἐγένεστης ἐλάτησιν  
 πόντον ἐλαύνοντες, καμάτη δ' ὑπὸ γυναὶ λέλυνται·  
 ὡς ἄρα τὰ Τρώεσσιν ἐελδομένοισι φανήτην·

which I render thus—

Thus saying, through the city-gates the noble Hector goes,  
 And godlike Paris by his side ; with eager ardour glows  
 The breast of each to lead the ranks, and man with man to close.  
 As when seafaring men long time have smote the sounding seas  
 With the smooth oar, and now no bond of strength is in their  
 knees,  
 When to their hoping hearts a god sends forth the favouring  
 breeze,  
 So to the Trojans' hoping hearts the warlike pair appear'd.

Here, according to the principles we have been laying down, the comparison completely cased in the three lines, 4, 5, and 6, will fail in aesthetic effect, or at least will lose altogether its original rhythmical character, if the three lines do not hold as closely together in the English as they do in the Greek, and this holding together, as every ear will comprehend, is far stronger with rhyme than without it. On the other hand, the three first lines do not present such a compact metrical unity as that I should have considered myself bound to reflect them by an English triplet, had it not been imposed on me by the necessity of the position ; while as to the seventh line rhyming with the first line of the following paragraph, if Professor Arnold objects to this, it is bringing a curious fastidiousness into these matters, of which neither Chaucer, nor Dryden, nor Coleridge, nor any of our great metrical masters had any notion.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The observation that the rhythm | the quatrain, so far as it may have any of Homer, as a popular δοςδος, is | value, is perfectly original on my part. founded on the couplet, the triplet, and | I accidentally stumbled on this truth

So much for the principle. There remains now only the application—which of the most current forms of the ballad measure, in the English language, is best adapted for the modern expression of the Homeric hexameter?—the old fourteen-syllabled iambic line of Chapman, the variation of it with a double ending, of which we have seen the type in

in the course of my translation, by a habit which I acquired of bracketing off in pencil each page of Homer into its natural cadences before I commenced the translation. Of the correctness of the observation I never entertained the slightest doubt, though when I mentioned it in conversation to Mr. Leigh Hunt some years before his death, that sunny-souled old poet seemed to receive it as something strange, and not at all according to the received English ideas on the subject. This may well be the case, considering the great lack of all philosophy, which Hermann justly noted in English metrical scholarship. But that I am not singular in my opinion, I am happy now to be able to show, by the following extract from Köchly, which expresses completely my own sentiments:—“Res hæc est, poëtas Homericos, qui carmina non legentibus scribebent sed audientibus recitanda et mente tantum linguaque componerent et solius memoria ope sibi retinerent aliquique tradenter, ipsius instinctu naturæ ad id artificium adduci necesse erat, quo non solum et canentium memoria sublevaretur et auscultantium audientia adjuvaretur, sed etiam ipsam carminis corpus quasi membris quibusdam integris articulisque congruentibus distingueretur. Hinc inventum, ut sere et narratarum rerum series et orationum tenor sermonumque alteratio in particulas quasdam dividere-

tur, quæ commode stropharum vel ternariarum vel quaternariarum vel etiam quinqueriarum—nam his quoque genealogici carminis proprii locus est apud Homerum—finibus includi possent. Ei legi vero et ad cantoris audientiumque commoditatem et ad ipsius carminis gratiam augendam inventæ minime in scrivilem modum ita se addixerunt, ut etiam contra ipsam illam legis causam versuum strophicorum numerum atque coherentiam retinuerint. Imo nec, ubiunque aut brevior sententia vel succincta notitia inserenda esset, ibi singulos binosversus interponere dubitaverunt, quod plerumque in solemnibus illis de loquendo edendo ceteraque vita quotidiana formulæ usu venit, et ubi sententiae ambitus atque copia major videretur, quam quæ artis strophe cancellis commode circumscribi posset, in longiorem etiam plurimum versuum seriem exspatiati sunt, id quod impribus et in similibus accuratissime ad veritatem depictis et in concitati animi multum fluenti oratione observare licet.”—(*De Iliadis Carm. Dissert.* iv. p. 15.) The same forcible and ingenious writer, whom I am sorry to say that in some of his critical acts of peculiarly German hardihood I cannot follow, has traced out the practice of a stichometrical symmetry in Homer to such an extent as to conclude that the composition of the Iliad displays in many cases a certain numerical

the Romaic ballad ;<sup>1</sup> the trochaic tetrameter catalectic of 'Locksley Hall,' or the octosyllabic English stanza, elevated and varied as it has been by the genius of Sir Walter Scott ? To this question it may be answered, that any of these measures, except the second, is good and wisely handled, may secure to Homer, in England, the thorough recognition of his character as an *ἀοιδός*, or minstrel, which has hitherto been ignored. The advantages peculiar to each may be shortly stated. In favour of Walter Scott's measure, may be pleaded the striking kinship between the whole character and tone of our modern Scotch minstrel's poetry and that of the ancient Ionian,<sup>2</sup> the easy flow of his verse, the fervid tramp of his rhyme, when required, and the variations which he has so successfully introduced into the somewhat monotonous flow of the old octosyllabic measure. On the other hand, it must be confessed that this verse, however skilfully handled, decidedly wants amplitude and breadth for the Homeric line ; and the breaking up of the grand single verse into two will often create serious difficulties, and open the way to various liberties, which, with a long line, might have been avoided. Against the verse of the Romaic ballad, which has been revived by Mr. Newman, there is nothing to say in theory ; only in practice it is placed in this very serious dilemma,

correspondence of parcels of lines, such as has been long recognised in the dia-logic part of the Greek drama. The matter is worthy of a more minute study than I have as yet been able to give to it ; but I fear much that in maintaining this doctrine, the German comports himself with that sort of arbitrary confidence in an idea from which the practical British intellect instinctively retreats.

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Newman saw a great truth when he wrote, "Walter Scott is the most Homeric of our British poets." Yes, and unquestionably also, next to Shakespeare, he will prove most permanent in his popularity. Literary fashions change ; but the broad, sunny, healthy humanity, which Homer, Scott, and Burns represent, is always the same.

that it must either dispense with rhyme altogether, contrary to the character of our English ballad verse, or force the genius of the poet to torture our language into a continuity of double rhymes, which, except in comic poetry, it does not admit. I therefore consider this variety to be practically out of the question. For the metre of 'Locksley Hall,' its rapidity, its force, and the example of Aytoun and Gladstone, plead powerfully.<sup>1</sup> But the drawbacks already mentioned,<sup>2</sup> and the danger of tempting the English ear with a metrical experiment altogether untried in narrative poetry of any length, seem rather to throw us back upon the long fourteen-syllabled iambic of Chapman. Here the translator, whose policy it always is not to create unnecessary difficulties, has to deal with a measure at once thoroughly congenial to the English language, familiar to the English ear, and satisfying with its stately march and pleasant amplitude the most characteristic demands which the Hellenic hexameter is entitled to make on its English equivalent. It is much to be preferred to the short line of eight syllables, or itself cut into eights and sixes, not only on account of the larger breath which the reciter takes in bringing it out, and the greater elevation of his note, but because it allows of greater variety in the pauses, and does not so readily pass into a monotonous chime as the octosyllabic verse, whose "fatal facility," Byron said, only the happy genius of Scott had succeeded in overcoming. It admits also of considerable variety in the point of rhyme, by the occasional consonance of the final syllables in the fourth foot, by the triplet, and by the sectional rhyming of the fourth and eighth syllables, where that may

<sup>1</sup> A Book of the Iliad, translated by W. E. Aytoun, and the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone. *Blackwood's Magazine*, London, 1863.  
1839. Translations by Lord Littleton <sup>2</sup> *Supra*, p. 404.

add force. It possesses also, along with the trochaic tetrameter, the peculiar advantage of generally expressing the original line for line, without any unnecessary amplitude; an advantage which Sir E. L. Bulwer, in his translations from Schiller, has justly rated very high.<sup>1</sup> I could produce many passages both from Pope and Cowper which have suffered severely from no other cause than from the shifting of the natural pauses and cadences, which the use of a metre of insufficient compass necessitates. And if any one should say that, in our monosyllabic tongue, a line of fourteen syllables will generally be too wide for a line of a corresponding number of syllables in Greek,<sup>2</sup> I reply, that if the most meagre and bald style of rendering Homer be thought the best, a line of ten syllables in English will very often contain all the sense, though certainly not all the sound, that is contained in a Greek hexameter. But if freedom and amplitude, and a luxuriant flow of sound, be characteristic qualities of Homeric verse, our own fourteen-syllabled iambic line will seldom be found too large; and if here and there the Greek may show three successive lines in which the sense has little weight in proportion to the sound, the English translator is always free to contract them into a couplet. Such liberties, wisely snatched, will improve the original, which a general and systematic condensation would spoil.

I shall conclude this discourse with a few remarks on the three great English translations of the Iliad by Chapman, Pope, and Cowper, confining myself to these three, partly that I may avoid the unseemly position of criticising those living translators, with whom, in the second part of this work,

<sup>1</sup> Preface, p. viii.

in a Greek hexameter is seventeen; fifteen may be about the average, the

<sup>2</sup> The utmost number of syllables lowest number being twelve.

I put myself in competition, partly because these names represent each a very distinct and marked type, from the virtues as from the faults of which future translators will wisely learn.

The great merits of Chapman, as be seemed an English writer contemporary of Shakspeare, are vigour, power, freshness, and originality. He had besides an unbounded admiration of his author; but was of far too strong, free, and poetic a nature to imagine that the fine flash and flow of a great genius can ever be adequately expressed by the mechanical method of a literal transference. In those days also they had a bold, direct way of looking at things, and an outspoken heartiness and honesty of phrase which is thoroughly Homeric. In this respect Chapman certainly was more favourably situated for rendering Homer into English than those who came after him. No translator is less anxious than Chapman to preserve the mere words of his original. Hence the strong manly fashion in which he takes the right word, as it were, by the cuff of the neck, and flings it into the arena to do his bidding. Take, for instance, his version of the following lines in the second book, describing the rush of the people to the sea-shore:—

" All the crowd was shoved about the shore ;  
In sway, like rude and raging waves rous'd with the fervent blore  
Of th' east and south winds, when they break from Jove's clouds,  
and are borne  
On rough backs of th' Icarian seas : or like a field of corn  
High grown, that Zephyr's vehement gusts bring easily underneath,  
And make the stiff up-bristled ears do homage to his breath :  
For even so easily, with the breath Atrides used, was sway'd  
The violent multitude. To fleet with shouts, and disarray'd,  
All rush'd ; and with a fog of dust their rude feet dimm'd the day."

No man will say that there is weakness or flatness here ; and, in respect of pith and muscle, Homer certainly has in this man met his match. On the other hand, every reader who knows his Greek Homer, is well aware that there are things in this passage which are not in the original, and may feel inclined to apply to Chapman's style of translation what Dryden said of Cowley's, " It is not always that a man will have a present made him when he expects the payment of a debt." This is true ; and, as we already said, the point here always is to hit the medium, and to allow every freedom in the translator which does not either omit any of his author's leading characteristics, or force upon him any of his own. But unfortunately Chapman, and indeed the Elizabethans generally, with all their power, were considerable mannerists. They had a very rare sort of mannerism, to be sure, springing from an excess of power, a very forward fancy, and a very protrusive wit ; but this mannerism, like spangles upon a quaker's robe, or ingenious fancies in a deathbed prayer, may often prove as fatal to poetry and to a good translation as the cheaper mannerism of feebleness and a barren wit. Under the influence of such a hypertrophy, to borrow a medical phrase, a man's strength becomes his weakness ; and so it is not seldom with Chapman. In the very passage which we have quoted, the direct comparison between the strong wind and the breath of Atrides is a conceit of the translator quite foreign to the original. Homer never had any such minute reference ; he never could have had it, with his genius, with his age, and with his audience ; he was too broad a painter to deal in petty points of this description. These are the matters in which, even when they are smallest, we cannot but say that Chapman, with all his smoking fervour and rough grandeur, is in general far from being

a good translator. His vices, that is, almost always, his exaggerated or misapplied virtues, are unfortunately most un-Homeric. Of ingenious conceits, quaint fancies, clever allusions, smart play upon words, the minstrel Homer had as little any idea as his heroes had of a French sauce to their roasted chine. But such things are constant in Chapman. He reminds me sometimes of those pictures of the Madonna, seen above the altar-piece in some Catholic church, which you would fain admire in their naked simplicity, but you can in nowise do so for the multitude of silvered gewgaws which the officiousness of local piety has pinned upon the canvas. And these ornaments in our Elizabethan translators, like the cathedral ornaments, are far from being always in the best taste. You will not find anywhere in the English language more splendid examples of boibast than in Chapman's Homer. If people do not always say so, it is either because they are ignorant, or because Chapman has been dead more than two hundred years; and there is a class of critics who are as prone to extenuate the defects of dead writers as to exaggerate the faults of the living. Besides, Chapman is an Elizabethan, and there is a charm in that word, to certain ears, powerful to gag all judgment, and consecrate any absurdity. What are we to think of

“The solid heap of night  
Shall interpose and stop mine ears against thy plaints and plight,”

where the simple and unpretentious old minstrel merely says,

*ἀλλά με τεθνήστα χυτὴ κατὰ γαῖα καλύπτοι.*<sup>1</sup>

which in plain English means, “ May the sod be cast and the mound be piled above my grave before I see such things ”?

<sup>1</sup> *Iliad vi. 464.*

Then what a miserable conceit, and what a cheap alliteration, lies in these lines—

“ And such a stormy day shall come, in mind and soul, I know,  
When sacred Troy shall shed her towers for tears of overthrow !”

It is to such passages as these that we may apply with truth Pope's naive remark, that Chapman often “ writes as Homer himself may be supposed to have done before he arrived at years of discretion.” Certainly, of Homeric simplicity Chapman had no more conception than the spangled word-decorators, against whom Wordsworth wrote, had of the weighty simplicity of the great poet of the Lakes. Homer could compare a child, and Wordsworth a flower, to a star ; but the simple

*ἀλίγκιον ἀστέρι καλῷ*

of the old Greek will not satisfy the ambitious Englishman, who must multiply the beauty by a process of poetical arithmetic, and say,—

“ Like a heavenly sign,  
Compact of many golden stars, the princely child did shine.”<sup>1</sup>

This sounds very grand, but is very bad writing, whether in verse or prose.<sup>2</sup> Chapman also it was who showed Pope the evil example of expanding two lines into half-a-dozen,—a fault arising partly from the ambitious wordiness of his version, partly from his constant interpolation of conceits, either altogether his own, or spun out of some impertinent commentary of the grammarians.<sup>3</sup> Add to these faults that he

<sup>1</sup> Iliad vi. 401.

<sup>2</sup> How much superior is even prosaic old Hobbes in this passage—

“ Now Hector met her with their little boy  
That in the nurse's arms was carried,  
And like a star upon her bosom lay  
His beautiful and shining golden head.”

But still with a pretty special application, not at all in the broad incurious manner of the old minstrel.

<sup>3</sup> See a notable instance about the elms in vi. 419. Also in the same book about the Alcian plain, 201, 325, 333.

not unfrequently mistakes the meaning of the text, and you will easily comprehend that the extraordinary laudations that have been heaped on this version by some writers, proceed more from a natural admiration of his genius, and a distinct impression of his power, than from a discriminating examination of his work. I have also, I am sorry to say—I know not how others feel—no particular pleasure in the verse that this stout Elizabethan uses. It is the same ballad measure which I myself use, but not written according to any laws, either in its own nature, or according to the best precedents for its use. In the couplet, as Chapman uses it, the compact harmony which belongs to that rhythmical form is seldom felt. It is broken up into unnatural sections and pauses, which utterly annihilate the broad simple flow of the Homeric metre, without giving us the regal march of the Miltonic blank verse. Of the real style of Homer as a minstrel, not as a literary man, Chapman had not the most remote conception.<sup>1</sup> He only looked upon him with transcendent undistinguishing admiration as an epic poet, as far above all other poets as Jupiter is high above the other gods.<sup>2</sup> And for the movement of his verse, though the chariot of his conceptions rolls grandly, and shows a front all crisp with gold and studded with jewels, I must say, that to my feeling it jolts upon a very rough road, and shakes my bones most uncomfortably.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The most striking proof of this is his frequent habit of turning what grammarians call the direct into the indirect speech. No minstrel 'n Homer's age knew what the indirect speech meant. The same directness and simplicity appears alike in the Book of Genesis and in the Gospel of John.

<sup>2</sup> Penon, whose judgments are extremely just, in his *Versiones Homeri*

*Anglice inter se comparata* (Bonn, 1861), says that Chapman undertook his version from an “*Amor et studium Græci poetæ fere lymphaticum*,” while Pope did it as a mercantile speculation to keep himself alive, and Cowper as a medicine for weak nerves and blue-devils.

<sup>3</sup> I am afraid my judgment of this famous old version may appear harsh;

The next in order is Pope. This translator has three great and thoroughly Homeric excellences, fervour, rapidity, and sound ; and these three virtues are such that they may well be allowed to cover a multitude of sins, and have, in fact, been so allowed. No translator of any classical work has been so widely read as Pope ; and even now, when a great change has come over the literary world, he maintains a high position. This popularity he owes to two circumstances : that he had the sense to choose a thoroughly popular and a thoroughly national measure, and that he handled this measure with consummate mastery. In one point, no doubt, his treatment of that metre falls short of its ideal : while he avoids the roughness and irregularity that marred the work of his great predecessor, he does not so happily steer clear of the opposite vice of sameness and monotony. But despite of this he pleases ; and pleasure, as Byron says, is always a pleasant thing ; and for a long journey one will rather amble along a smooth road with an occasional feeling of weariness, than submit to the irregular jerk, trot, gallop, and plunge of a more adventurous Pegasus. Perhaps the greatest of the virtues of Pope's verse is that it sounds well. Poetry is the luxury of articulate sound ; and a rich supply of this luxury is what the public, in the first place, is entitled to demand of a poetical translator. If a man professes to be a

but if I am wrong, it is strange that Professor Arnold, with whom I disagree on not a few points of Homeric criticism (*On Translating Homer*, p. 28), should have pronounced pretty much the same censure. Of Keats and his splendid sonnet I say nothing ; for he was a young man and a poet, and might have looked with a wild surmise,

" Silent as on a peak in Darien,"

after reading any other translation as well as Chapman's, had it been the best he happened to lay his hands on. With the admirable judgment of Chapman by Professor Craik, in his *Sketches of the Literature and Learning of England*, vol. ii., I am ready in every syllable to concur.

painter he ought to be a good draughtsman, but before all, he must be a good colourist; it is the specialty of his art. No one, therefore, who considers that translations are made for the pleasure of the public, will grudge Pope the easy triumph which his translation of the Iliad, in spite of gross faults, gained over what we may certainly call the superior poetical genius of Chapman. It was not only that the taste of the age was in his hand, and that the precedent of the great French wits stamped his style with classicality, but he presented Greek poetry to the English people in those aspects in which it will always be most readily apprehended. He gave them verses which they could enjoy; Chapman gave them fancies which made them stare. But in spite of all this well-deserved popularity, the time was coming when his faults, happily concealed beneath a breadth of gorgeous drapery, would be exposed. The age in which Pope lived was an age which, in its literary fashion, preferred elegance to strength, ornament to simplicity, and art to nature. Of this age Pope was one of the foremost spokesmen; and, as such, unquestionably had no special vocation to translate Homer. The faults which proceeded from this strange want of congruity between the work and the workman are many; and, now that a new school of poetry has opened the eyes of the public, are almost as obvious as his virtues. It is happy, however, for the English readers of Greek poetry, that they have not in their ears a prose version of the Iliad equal in classical chasteness and simplicity to the Book of Genesis and the Gospel of John in our Bibles; otherwise Pope, with all his talent, would excite general disgust in many places, where he now only offends against the laws of good taste in poetical composition, revivified in the popular mind by the practice of Cowper and Wordsworth, Burns, Scott, and

Tennyson. The great fault of Pope is his determination to be grand—a determination which achieves its purpose too often by mere pomp of sound and flourish of rhetorical trumpets, without regard to the truth of the picture he has to paint. As Arnold says well, he is apt to plant his style formally betwixt himself and his object, whereas the true poetic eye looks at the object simply. Hence the simplicity of Homer, of Goethe, of Tennyson, in his later and best style; each very different in its kind, but all equally opposed to the luxuriant brandishment of words, and the accumulated bedizement, that so frequently characterize Pope's style. Pope's high-sounding verbosity is as far removed from Homer's simplicity as Chapman's; but the verboseness of Pope, though more pleasant to the ear, is less striking to the fancy, and less suggestive to the thought. Take a familiar example from the descent of Apollo, in the well-known passage, I. 47—

“ Breathing revenge, a sudden night he spread,  
And gloomy darkness roll'd around his head.”

There is nothing here, as a mere piece of writing, positively wrong, or contrary to the laws of good taste. But what would the man who loves his Bible say, if, instead of the simple sentence so much admired by Longinus—

“ God said, Let there be light ; and there was light,”

he should be called upon to read, in some elegant English version of the Mosaic account of the creation, some such lines as the following :—

“ God said, Let light arise with joyful ray,  
And paint the scene with hues of varied day ;  
The light shone forth at the divine command,  
And floods of glory burst o'er sea and land !”

Now, to a reader who has in his ear the simple

ὅ δ' ἡγε νυκτὶ ἐσικώς

of Homer, Pope's version in this place has a precisely similar effect. In the Gospel we read in one memorable place the two words

JESUS WEPT.

It was the great misfortune of Pope, both as a poet generally, and specially as a translator of Homer, that he did not see the beauty and the eloquent pathos of such a simple sentence as this. In the sixth book of the Iliad (ver. 405) there occurs a passage of similar pathetic simplicity—

Ἄνδρομάχη δέ οἱ ἄγχι παρίστατο δακρυγέουσα,  
ἐν τ' ἄρα οἱ φῦ χειρί, ἐπος τ' ἔφατ', ἐκ τ' ὀνόμαζεν.

which simply means,

“ Andromache stood beside him weeping, and held his hand in hers, and called him Hector, and said : ”

which Pope renders thus—

“ His beauteous princess cast a mournful look,  
Hung on his hand, and then dejected spoke,  
Her bosom labour'd with a boding sigh,  
And the big tear stood trembling in her eye ! ”

Perhaps this also is not absolutely wrong ; but it is not Homeric. One other example of this tendency to wordy elaboration may be taken from the well-known and much-criticised night-scene in the eighth book (ver. 551-565)—

Οἱ δὲ, μέγα φρονέοντες, ἐπὶ πτολέμοιο γεφύρῃ  
εἴατο παννύχιοι· πυρὰ δέ σφισι καίετο πολλά.  
ώς δ' ὅτ' ἐν οὐρανῷ ἀστρα φαεινὴν ἀμφὶ σελήνην  
φαίνετ' ἀριπρεπέα, ὅτε τ' ἐπλετο νήνεμος αἰθήρ·  
[ἐκ τ' ἔφανεν πᾶσαι σκοπιαὶ καὶ πρώονες ἄκροι,  
καὶ νάπαι· οὐρανόθεν δ' ἄρ' ἵπερρόάγη ἀσπετος αἰθήρ,]  
πάντα δέ τ' εἰδεται ἀστρα· γέγηθε δέ τε φρένα πομήν.

τόσσα μεσηγὸν νεῶν ἡδὲ Μάνθοιο ρόάνη,  
 Τρώων καιόντων, πυρὰ φαίνετο Ἰλιόθι πρό.  
 χίλι' ἄρ' ἐν πεδίῳ πυρὰ καίετο· πάρ δὲ ἐκάστῳ  
 εἴατο πεντήκοντα, σέλα πυρὸς αἰθομένοιο.  
 ἵπποι δὲ κρὶ λευκὸν ἐρεπτόμενοι καὶ δλύρας,  
 ἐσταότες παρ' ὥχεσφιν, ἐνθρονον Ἡῶ μίμνον.

Of this, Pope's well-known version is—

“ The troops exulting sat in order round,  
 And beaming fires illumined all the ground.  
 As when the moon, refulgent lamp of night !  
 O'er heaven's clear azure spreads her sacred light,  
 When not a breath disturbs the deep serene,  
 And not a cloud o'ercasts the solemn scene ;  
 Around her throne the vivid planets roll,  
 And stars unnumber'd gild the glowing pole,  
 O'er the dark trees a yeller verdure shed,  
 And tip with silver every mountain's head ;  
 Then shine the vales, the rocks in prospect rise,  
 A flood of glory bursts from all the skies :  
 The conscious swains, rejoicing in the sight,  
 Eye the blue vault, and bless the useful light.  
 So many flames before proud Ilion blaze,  
 And lighten glimmering Xanthus with their rays :  
 The long reflections of the distant fires  
 Gleam on the walls, and tremble on the spires.  
 A thousand piles the dusky honours gild,  
 And shoot a shady lustre o'er the field.  
 Full fifty guards each flaming pile attend,  
 Whose umber'd arms, by fits, thick flashes send ;  
 Loud neigh the coursers o'er their heaps of corn,  
 And ardent warriors wait the rising morn.”

Perhaps, as Wilson says, the only great fault here is Pope's usual one of glittering accumulation and sounding elaboration ; but in order to see how far it is from the style of Homer, those who cannot read the Greek may satisfy

themselves from the following finished version by our Poet-Laureate :—

“ So Hector said, and sea-like roar’d his host ;  
 Then loosed their sweating horses from the yoke,  
 And each beside his chariot bound his own ;  
 And oxen from the city, and goodly sheep  
 In haste they drove, and honey-hearted wine  
 And bread from out the houses brought, and heap’d  
 Their firewood, and the winds from off the plain  
 Roll’d the rich vapour far into the heaven.  
 And these all night upon the bridge of war  
 Sat glorying ; many a fire before them blazed :  
 As when in heaven the stars about the moon  
 Look beautiful, when all the winds are laid,  
 And every height comes out, and jutting peak  
 And valley, and the immeasurable heavens  
 Break open to their highest, and all the stars  
 Shine, and the Shepherd gladdens in his heart :  
 So many a fire between the ships and stream  
 Of Xanthus blazed before the towers of Troy,  
 A thousand on the plain ; and close by each  
 Sat fifty in the blaze of burning fire ;  
 And champing golden grain, the horses stood  
 Hard by their chariots, waiting for the dawn.”<sup>1</sup>

The only other fault of Pope which deserves mention is his well-known delight in glittering antitheses and elegant points of expression. Homer, like every popular poet, has his store of proverbial sayings, expressed by him generally in the rounded form of a single line or couplet, or even in a triplet, or, as in Iliad vi. 146, in a quatrain ; but of the

<sup>1</sup> *Enoch Arden and other Poems*, 1864, p. 177. I may mention that I consider the two lines, 557, 558, in this celebrated passage interpolated, and many ingenious criticisms of Wilson (Essays, vol. iv. p. 119) and others, wasted in explaining a difficulty which Homer had no hand in creating.

rhetorical figure called antithesis, as used by French wits and literary men, he knows nothing.

The peculiar characteristics of Cowper's translation arose out of the genius of the man, the circumstances under which he wrote, and the tendency which ruled him to avoid the faults of his predecessors. His genius was simple, homely, easy, familiar, and thoroughly natural ; his circumstances were sad ; he wrote as a medicine to his mind during prolonged fits of the most oppressive despondency ; his reactive tendency against the faults of his predecessors, if not carefully guarded against, would naturally lead him into meagreness, tameness, and flatness. Of this he was himself fully aware. He started with the canon of literalness, a valuable one under certain limitations, though by no means, as we have seen in itself, an adequate one, and against which both Pope and Chapman had committed so many splendid sins. "Fidelity," says he in his Preface, "is of the very essence of translation. The matter found in me, whether the reader like it or not, is found in Homer, and the matter not found in me, how much soever he may admire it, is found only in Mr. Pope. I have omitted nothing ; I have invented nothing." This is the language of an honest man, a conscientious man, as Cowper even too curiously was, and one who was determined neither to deceive his reader, nor allow himself to be deceived as a translator, by any juggling witcheries of the imagination, however seductive. But his honesty, and his conscientiousness, and his plain dealing with himself—a virtue which he learned from the blessed Gospels which he loved—taught him also to fear that perhaps neither honesty nor conscientiousness, nor any evangelical virtue in itself, would always be sufficient to carry a poetical translation with full sail afloat on the sea of popular approbation. Therefore he pro-

tests, “ To those who shall be inclined to tell me that my diction is often plain and inelegant, I reply beforehand that I know it ; that it would be absurd were it otherwise ; and that Homer himself stands in the same predicament.” These words reveal the whole secret of the principle on which Cowper’s Iliad was composed, contain the text of all its profound excellences and all its prominent defects. The radiant studs of Chapman and the rhetorical pyrotechny of Pope were both to disappear. This is his grand virtue. But when the English is to be bald and flat because Homer is the same, there is a double weakness here, for which the pretty apology is scarcely sufficient—the weakness of Cowper’s mind, which was not of the sounding and tramping character of Homer’s, and the weakness of Cowper’s English language as contrasted with Homer’s Ionic Greek, for which, on his naked principle of literalness, he could offer no compensation ; but for which both Chapman and Pope amply compensated, sometimes by creating new beauties, at other times by plucking the offence from the forehead of a fault, through the charm of some brilliant or sonorous impropriety. A few examples will illustrate both the strength and the weakness of Cowper’s peculiar manner.

His chaste simplicity, and quiet, manly, unambitious dignity, appear nowhere with more effect than in the version of the celebrated lines on the descent of Apollo (l. 43-52), to which we have had several times occasion to allude. In the Greek it runs thus :—

‘Ως ἔφατ’ εὐχόμενος· τοῦ δ’ ἔκλινε Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων.  
βῆ δὲ κατ’ Οἰλύμπιο καρήνων, χωόμενος κῆρ,  
τόξ’ ὀμοισιν ἔχων ἀμφηρεφέα τε φαρέτρην  
ἔκλαγξαν δ’ ἄρ’ οὖστοι ἐπ’ ὄμιων χωομένοιο,  
αὐτοῦ κινηθέντος· ὁ δ’ ἦμε νυκτὶ ἔσικώς.  
ἔζετ’ ἐπειτ’ ἀπάνευθε νεῶν, μετὰ δ’ ἵὸν ἔηκεν’

δεινὴ δὲ κλαγγὴ γένετ' ἀργυρέοιο βιοῖο.  
οὐρῆς μὲν πρῶτον ἐπέχετο καὶ κύνας ἀργοὺς  
αὐτὰρ ἔπειτ' αὐτοῖσι βέλος ἔχεπευκὲς ἐφείς,  
βάλλει· αἰεὶ δὲ πυρὰν νεκύων καίοντο θαμειαῖ.

Thus in Cowper :—

“ Such prayer he made, and it was heard. The God,  
Down from Olympus with his radiant bow  
And his full quiver o'er his shoulder slung,  
March'd in his anger ; shaken as he moved  
His rattling arrows told of his approach.  
Gloomy he came as night ; sat from the ships  
Apart and sent an arrow. Clang'd the cord  
Dread-sounding, bounding on the silver bow.  
Mules first and dogs he struck, but at themselves  
Despatching soon his bitter arrows keen,  
Smote them. Death-piles on all sides always blazed.”

Here there is nothing to lament, except the misfortune, inherent in decasyllabic verse, as a substitute for hexameter, that the beautiful cadence which places  $\delta'$   $\eta\mu\epsilon$   $\nu\nu\kappa\tau\bar{\iota}$   $\acute{\epsilon}\omega\kappa\omega\acute{\sigma}$  at the end of the line is reversed. On the other hand, in the last line, the original pause and the whole movement of the line is retained, forming altogether a fine contrast to the sounding couplet with which Pope drowns the striking pictorial desolation of the picture. Such truly classical touches are everywhere to be found in Cowper ; and it is with reference to them, doubtless, that Wilson says it is “ only dunces who think Cowper dull.” It is the misfortune of this translator that his excellences are such as require a cultivated taste to appreciate them, while his faults are open to all. For it is not to be denied that with all the graceful and effective truthfulness of many passages, the image of Homer which Cowper presents, on the whole, is somewhat pale, flat,

and attenuated.<sup>1</sup> In plain English, there is a want of spirit in the work. The line flags, as if it partook of the mental depression under the evil influence of which the poet wrote. This is felt at the very outset. In ver. 29 for instance, *τὴν δὲ ἐγώ οὐ λύσω*, the natural order of passion is turned by Cowper into what schoolboys call the order of construction, that is, the cold order of logic :—

“ I will not loose thy daughter.”

No man writing under the impulse of a strong passion, in any language, could have so arranged his words in this case; and accordingly we find that Chapman comes emphatically out with the original collocation, thus :—

“ Her thou seek’st I still will hold mine own  
Till age deflower her.”

The same remark applies to the line 59,

‘Ατρείδη, νῦν ἀμμε παλιμπλαγχθέντας οἴω,

where Cowper makes Achilles open,

“ Atrides, I suppose, if we escape  
With life, we now must wander home again,”

with the cold unemphatic formality of an Attorney-General making a statement on a law point in the House of Commons. It is true, as Cowper tells us above, the word “ I suppose ” is in the Greek as well as in the English; but in point of passion and emphasis it makes all the difference in the world whether it stands here, at the beginning, or, as it does in the Greek, at the end of the line. The same remark applies to the position of *αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ* in ver. 118. The lines 81-83—

<sup>1</sup> “ Homerum ipsum non repræsentat Couperus sed tantum ejus imaginem adinudum attenuatam.”—Penon.

εἴπερ γάρ τε χόλον γε καὶ αὐτῆμαρ καταπέψῃ,  
ἀλλά τε καὶ μετόπισθεν ἔχει κότον, ὅφρα τελέσσῃ,  
ἐν στήθεσσιν ἔοιστι σὺ δὲ φράσαι, εἰ με σαώσεις—

about anger nursed in the bosom of kings, are rendered by Chapman in his rough, vigorous way :—

“ Though that day his wrath seems to digest  
Th' offence he takes, yet evermore he rakes up in his breast  
Brands of quick anger, till revenge hath quench'd to his desire  
The fire reserved ; ”

where, if there be something added to the Greek, there is, at all events, a total effect not unworthy of Homer. How weak and commonplace, on the other hand, is Cowper here, with only one word to express the effect of the *χόλον* and the *κότον* in the original :—

“ For though he smother his revenge to-day,  
He still retains it, and at last performs.”

Through the whole book, weak, feeble, and inadequate expressions constantly appear, as in ver. 129, for

Τροίην εὐτείχεον ἔξαλαπάξαι,

where there is surely both sound and emphasis enough, he gives only

“ And when Jove's favour shall have given us Troy.”

So for *κερδαλεόφρον*, in ver. 149, he gives us the common “ full of subtlety ; ” and in ver. 217, for *μάλα περ θυμῷ κεχολωμένον*, the trite prosaic turn, “ provoked in the extreme.”

In common with Pope, and almost all the English translators except Newman, Cowper shows a remarkable insensitivity to the characteristic power of epithets.<sup>1</sup> These he either omits altogether, or wipes out their individual character by a vague generality ; as where for “ white-armed ” he

<sup>1</sup>*Supra*, p. 114.

gives " majestic," for " large-eyed," or " with blooming cheeks," " beauteous," and so forth. Frequently also the associations which his words bring to the ear of the reader, are quite modern ; as when *ἔργα γυναικῶν* (ver. 115) is rendered " accomplishments,"—a phrase which, if it was applied to the wife of the father of the faithful in the Book of Genesis, could not look more incongruous. To these faults of tame-ness and a want of perception of the minstrel character of Homer, add the false Miltonic tone and movement which he gives to his verse, and his frequently ill-timed Latinism of expression, and we shall see no cause to wonder why the British public generally have seemed inclined rather to underrate than to overrate the merit of Cowper's Iliad. They had a sort of true instinct that the easy, gracefully moralizing author of 'The Sofa' was not the man to take the lash of Hector's charioteer in his hand, and send the chariot of Achilles rattling over the crimson fields of Homeric battle. They felt also that flatness, even though only occasional flatness, was in poetry an unpardonable sin ; and on the whole came to the conclusion, that if Cowper was to be received on English ground as an interpreter of Homer at all, it was in the more quiet and rural domain of the Odyssey ; and they were unquestionably right.

I have thus brought to a conclusion the discussions which I thought it my duty to place before the student of the Homeric poems, by way of aiding him somewhat in forming an intelligent judgment of the character and value of these most ancient memorials of human culture, from the advanced position of philological and critical science at the present day. In so far as I have done so with accurate investiga-tion, conscientious industry, and sound judgment, I feel con-

fident that I shall receive the thanks of all those whose good opinion is worth having. In so far as I may have fallen short of the loftier ambition which the next portion of this work indicates, not only to expound Homer truly, but to set him forth in a poetical garb worthy, in some measure, both of his genius and of the English tongue, it can be no great disgrace to me to have failed where some of the most brilliant names in English literature are my companions in defeat. But whether or not I shall be judged to have made any thankworthy contribution to the translated literature of my country, the man who has spent twelve years of honest toil in the study of such an author as Homer has already received the better half of his reward.

END OF VOL. I.





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